The Myth of The Sexual Revolution

Chronicles of Culture

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The Myth of the Sexual Revolution

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EDITOR'S COMMENT

Sexual Revolution is a pathetic misnomer. The most popular feature of revolutions is their reversal of roles: aristocrats go to the scaffold, judged by the wretched of the earth. The needy are told that all their needs will be fulfilled. The greedy have all their luxuries withdrawn—at least temporarily. In light of this simple recipe, nothing short of a mass impregnation of men by women would be enough of a sexual turnaround to justify the term revolution.

Revolutions are fomented by a mass dissatisfaction that engulfs a society and triggers violent outbreaks. If the 60's can be considered the beginning of the upheaval, history registers no previous tumult in the streets over the mass redistribution of sexual assets. What occurred was a change in attitudes—at first limited to a specific stratum of politically active intelligentsia, then transformed by the sensationalist-prone media into a cultural and behavioral trend. The media, as well as the entire opinion-making trade, were striving at exactly that time for a new role within the American civilization; they thus had a tremendous stake in the political proposition which was encapsulated in the slogan "make love not war." Boundless vistas suddenly opened before the new breed of American power-brokers—Manhattan's liberal press lords and publishers. Their hubris and hype in matters of sex, hitherto confined to abysmal trivialities, became—forthwith—endowed with ideology and dialectics. Within just a couple of years the subject had been appropriated not only from masters of Joycean caliber, Faulknerian gravity or even John O'Hara-like realistic bluntness, but also from the purveyors of sleazy Gothic prurience, à la Harold Robbins, and even from the peddlers of under-the-counter pornography. Ever since, sexualia has become a diversified industry in which pseudoscholarly littérateurs are rewarded not for insight but for fidelity to the line currently in vogue, and psychologists, sociologists and educators earn enormous sums for their endless proclamations of "findings" which are so trite and vulgar that even half a century ago they would have been laughed at in men's pubs by anyone over 18. The orgy of trampling the basic conventions and sensibilities of man-woman interrelationships has been going on now for almost two decades: it's not a revolution—it's a multibillion-dollar business.

But it also serves political purposes. Transvaluation of values, which often degenerates into nihilism, has always been a well-tested weapon of the political left: many times in history sexual customs have proved to be malleable by political subversion and manipulation. Eighteenth-century France and 19th-century Russia are excellent examples of how the dissolution of mores can serve political gains, how ideas of spurious egalitarianism and perverted freedom can benefit from being associated with the destruction of tenets that underlie sexual sensitivities—one of the most important human claims to betterness and civility. Yet, what is going on now in America somehow transcends political games: we are witnessing a different competition for power, one that goes beyond politics and aims at a more complete submission of man to doctrines. Therefore, putting worn-out labels—like secular humanism, liberal valuelessness or amoral radicalism—on the cynical promoters of sexual "liberation" won't do.

The phoniness of the term sexual "revolution" lies in the fact that it proposes nothing new—which is exactly what revolutions are supposed to do. The "prerevolutionary" American structure of sexual values was predicated on the chronic shortage of women on this continent; the residues of this long-forgotten sociodemographic condition were manifested, until recently, in what we still can see in old movies: men taking their hats off when a woman enters an elevator. The gist of the "revolution" can thus be grotesquely, but not unbelievably, summarized by what men now might take off when a woman enters a New York elevator, especially if some followers of punk lifestyles are already inside. (Some modish ads go even further and portray, perhaps not entirely unrealistically, what could happen to a young and handsome lift operator when an avowed feminist executive enters—and we are barely 20 years removed from *The Apartment,* a Billy Wilder movie, a touching love story on the theme of executives, elevators and their female operators.) Woman as a protected and respected combination of species *cum* symbol is out these days, extinguished by social theories, feminism and modish concepts of conduct; she's also out as an idiosyncratic component of a culture, a category for itself where conventional separateness determines customs and manners, but not the rudiments of existence. Thus, what happened to woman is not a revolution but the obliteration of a civilizational pattern. That does not change reality, merely impoverishes it.

The next casualty is sexuality's preciousness, uniqueness, its purely human quality, unknown in the animal world, which mates simply according to nature and season, without imbuing the procreative drive with any other sustaining contents.

There was always a good deal of robust lustiness in the fabric of American life and folklore, the natural vigor of men and women in a bountiful land of hard work, fearful dangers and cherished freedoms. Just like everywhere else, sexuality here was a source of passion, happiness, tragedy. The vitality and energy which became the national characteristics of Americans gave sexuality a sensationalist tinge which was particularly noticeable during the era of conquest, exploration and daring adventurousness of pioneer life. On the other hand, the excesses of individualism inherent in this social ambiance had to be regulated somehow by principles and precepts—the rigidity of which often resulted in conventions that were less normative than hypocritical. Religion, which, in Europe, had tried for

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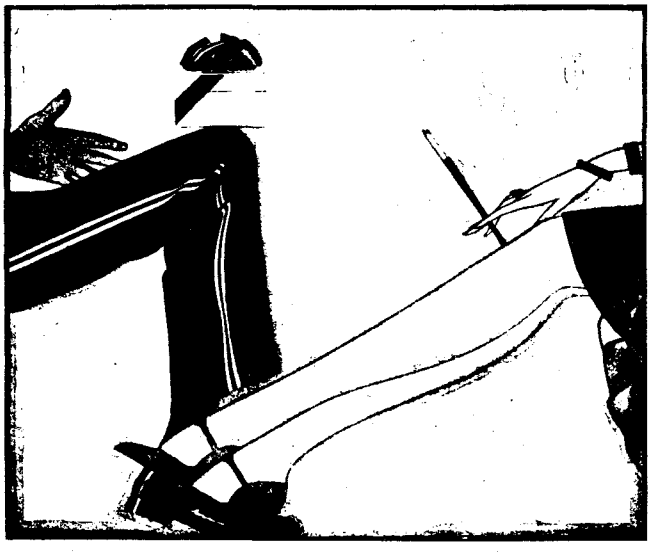
millennia to walk a tightrope between sexual morality and sexual mores, in America went head over heels into a direct confrontation—and the end result is our current chaos in which some American churches opt for modish permissive progressivism just to keep their flock in the pews, while others use obsolete dialectics to combat a permissiveness which they cannot comprehend. Actually, what Victorian arrangements in sexual manners did to America was to sublimate sexual satisfactions, which made their emotional texture different from, but probably more rewarding than, that of other cultures.

What the 60's did to American sexuality was to engender a sudden quantification, mass-popularization and trivialization of accepted practices. Revolution means qualitative change, the introduction of *something*—the birth of an idea, a technological breakthrough, a new concept of interrelationships between people—but nothing of this sort occurred. No new reality was invented. What happened was a recrafting of sexual postures which were well known from other junctures of history. Human sexual conduct (so it was said) needed no norms of any kind; an increased volume of sexual activity is an indication of personal freedom which reforms the social order; men and women should reject criteria of sexual etiquette in order to become better, more human; a life improved is a life in which sexual casualness mercilessly evicts reverence for and exceptionality of the sexual experience; mass-produced values for sexual acts advance social progress; perfunctory sexual engagements determine a higher consciousness; scientists, writers and social pundits (the consciences of our time) have full license to inject normlessness into society at their convenience.

There was nothing new in this concept of sexuality—what *Playboy* announced as novel had been practiced by Eve in the first version of the Club Mediterrannée, a much more lush rendition than any subsequent one. What the puny commercial hustlers pushed in America as a sexual revolution was old hat in Sodom. However, there was one new factor—the mass media and the entertainment industry, which thrived on presenting these worn-out notions as dizzying revelations. The news that "everything goes," for adults and juveniles alike, was, for the peddlers of pop culture and "lifestyles," similar to the California gold rush. The way they plugged into that boom turned the quantity coefficient into a herd instinct. Universal permission for the young to plunge into sexual activity, sanctioned by the media's quotidian omnipresence in all channels of the cultural spectrum, brought about a monstrous increase in the overall volume of fornication. Unprejudiced students were always aware of the fact that the volume was a varying matter: people always did *it* rather profusely; what was changing was the attitude toward information about those practices—the intensity and frequency of their widespread visibility. Periods of hecticality, passivity and constraint have alternated throughout history, modified by religions, moral climates, socioeconomic preoccupations, mythologies. One thing is observable: although those who argued for the relaxation of sexual mores and for blunt openness about them *claimed* to foster society's health and happy stability, mankind always seemed to flourish most—socially and culturally—during eras of prudery, hypocrisy and regimentation. Empires and wealth were built on sexual conventions, and their demise was always signaled by the "wholesome" abolition of those conventions and the accepted dissolution of sexual comportment.



The journalists' ignorant hype—the scourge of our epoch and the yeast of the liberal press's omnipotence—proclaimed a revolution that never took place. The daily-communication racket has structured a reality in which new taboos, idols, mental constructs and habits are fabricated. The tone of journalistic enunciations on things sexual in the *New York Times, Time* magazine and on CBS is, in essence, the same coinage of clichés as the medieval obscurantist preacheries about the interaction between the devil and carnality—in a diametrically opposite sense, of course. When a silver-haired obstetrician who represents Planned Parenthood argues on television for juvenile access to contraceptives and abortion *without* parental consent and who predicts that to refuse these adolescent "civil rights" will result in an America engulfed by a cataclysm of teen-age pregnancies, we have a surrealistic inversion of the free-will principle—namely that human sexual destiny does not belong to a person, his or her individual qualities, existential priorities, emotions, ties, bonds, etc., but to a bureaucratized, allegedly scientific "Providence" whose supreme ontological force—called "research"—holds ultimate sway over human fate.

What has the introduction of the term "sexual revolution," and all the social symptoms connected to it, done to everyday life?

Those segments of society which accepted that philosophy—

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Despair & Escape

Matthew J. Bruccoli: *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald;* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; New York.

Millicent Dillon: *A Little Original Sin: The Life and Works of Jane Bowles;* Holt, Rinehart & Winston; New York.

by James J. Thompson, Jr.

> Who shall unriddle the puzzle of the artist nature? Who understands the mingling of discipline and licence in which it stands so deeply rooted?
> Thomas Mann

Long after novelists have become as scarce as wandering bards, biographers will continue to ply their trade, serving up to a ravenous public the morsels of fact—scintillating, titillating, edifying—that they have picked from the moldering bones of long-dead writers. Why this compelling fascination with the lives of novelists? What does that knowledge bring one? Does Hemingway's suicide illumine *The Sun Also Rises?* Do Faulkner's bouts with the bottle enhance the splendor of *Absalom, Absalom?*

The ancient Greeks revered the poet as one touched by the gods; perhaps we still seek in the novelist's life a revelation of how the divine afflatus confers upon a frail mortal the awesome power of words. Given the proclivity of novelists for a self-destructiveness that shows itself in drunkenness, sexual debauchery, pills and suicide, the reader of biographies may simply be seeking the thrill of skating vicariously around the edge of the abyss. The starving poet who puts a bullet in his brain is terribly romantic so long as that poet is not oneself. Then, too, tales of *la vie bohème* enliven what we often mistakenly see as the quotidian drabness of our proper and respectable lives. No, there will never cease to be a market for the annual crop of literary biographies.

"All the world's a stage/And all the men and women merely players," wrote Shakespeare, and even the most unimaginative of men enriches his existence by donning masks, changing costumes and playing Lear one day, Falstaff the next. This should frighten the chronicler of even the most mundane of lives, but he who would take the measure of a novelist's life faces an especially difficult task. F. Scott Fitzgerald pinpointed the problem: "There never was a good biography of a good novelist. There couldn't be. He is too many people if he's any good." The novelist transmutes life into art, but to a greater degree than his fellow actors, he faces the temptation to transform art into life: a novelist's creativity does not cease when he lays down his pen after a day's labor. Fitzgerald's warning to biographers came from self-knowledge, for, as Matthew J. Bruccoli points out, Fitzgerald cast himself in a variety of roles. Others have done the same: William Faulkner strutted the streets of Oxford, Mississippi as a self-proclaimed war hero, and Hemingway's efforts to be the man of his imagination led him to the brink of habitual prevarication. Of Jane Bowles, Millicent Dillon writes: "Of course, she knew she was puzzling, and she enjoyed it."

Professor Bruccoli recognizes the obstacles that litter the path of the biographer; he accepts the challenge boldly, and even quotes on the flyleaf of his book Fitzgerald's denigration of the biographer's craft. Bruccoli seeks a solution in empiricism: "My understanding of the responsibility of a biographer is that he should assemble a great many details in a usable way, relying heavily on the subject's own words." Facts will dispel the fanciful accretions of a lifetime, and the truth will emerge. In *A Little Original Sin* Millicent Dillon piles up information and "the subject's own words" as assiduously as does Professor Bruccoli, but Miss Dillon searches for something more: by distilling the inner meaning of Jane Bowles's existence she hopes to gain insight into her own life. Biography, then, becomes self-revelation.

Anyone with even a passing acquaintance with American literary history can recite the familiar facts of the Fitzgerald story: the talented but undisciplined Princeton undergraduate; the successful young novelist, author of *This Side of Paradise* and *The Great Gatsby;* husband to the beautiful and destructive Zelda; the Golden Boy of the 20's, cynosure to a generation of youth longing for glamor and good times; the alcoholic and fading novelist of the 30's; the failed Hollywood scriptwriter, dead at forty-four, leaving behind the unfinished manuscript of *The Last Tycoon.* The stuff of legends lies in those bare facts, and if Fitzgerald has been victimized by the legendmongers he has only himself to blame; he created those legends himself.

Professor Bruccoli sees Fitzgerald as a "hero, with many flaws, but a hero." To assess that judgment one need go no further than Bruccoli's book, for he supplies all possible information. One must certainly grant that there was "some sort of epic grandeur," as Fitzgerald called it, in

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his life: neither alcohol, nor a debilitating marriage, nor the shattering of youthful dreams prevented him from writing at least one novel and a dozen short stories that guarantee him a secure place in the pantheon of American letters. Although he may not be one of "the greatest writers who ever lived," as Professor Bruccoli asserts, his achievement elevates him to the forefront of 20th-century American writers. Fitzgerald needs no drumbeaters to keep his name alive.

Splendid as his work is, Fitzgerald lived a sad life, a life without the moorings he so desperately needed. He pursued Zelda Sayre as the embodiment of his romantic dream of perfection. Having won her, he discovered the reality: Zelda would not — perhaps could not — give him the happiness and security which would support him in his quest for artistic greatness. The marriage dragged both of them into despair and mutual torment. Fitzgerald also lacked that single-minded determination and iron discipline that would have enabled him to moor his life to his art. He wanted literary immortality, but he also lusted after glamor, popular acclaim and money. No cold garrets or dank basements for Fitzgerald: between 1920 and 1929 he earned $244,967 from his writings, but even that princely sum failed to slake his thirst for the ease and grace that money could buy. He constantly bemoaned the necessity to churn out popular stories to earn the money that would free him to write his novels and to live grandly. Such self-pity evokes little compassion when one considers some of the other, perhaps more important, writers who lived in penury, sacrificing all to the high calling of their art.

A man can wander far only if the meaning of his existence is derived from a sense of place, from the knowledge that one belongs to a people who have been shaped by the play of history upon a given location. Faulkner, for one, had this; Fitzgerald did not. He felt little kinship with the nouveau-riche Irishmen of his mother's family. St. Paul, Minnesota inspired in him no love or sense of belonging. At times he fancied himself something of a Southern aristocrat by virtue of his father's ties with the old families of Maryland. Edward Fitzgerald fed young Scott with the lore of the Lost Cause and schooled his son in the impeccable manners of a gentlemen. Whatever Southern identification Edward Fitzgerald conveyed to his son, it did not stick: Fitzgerald had no anchor in the genteel Maryland past. Only death would link him to the soil his ancestors had nurtured: he is buried in a cemetery in Rockville, Maryland, not far from the site of "Glenmary," the farm of his father's people.

Scott Fitzgerald grew up in the Roman Catholic Church, but the Church had little lasting effect upon him. The majesty of its ritual appealed to his budding romanticism, and an occasional hero of the Faith fired his imagination; implausible as it may sound, during his student days at Newman School in New Jersey Fitzgerald actually flirted with the idea of entering the priesthood. Once free of a Catholic environment, however, he drifted away from the Church. On February 20, 1920, he wrote to a friend: "You're still a catholic but Zelda's the only God I have left now." This god soon failed him, leaving only the evanescing memories of the first rapturous moments of his "conversion"; in the 1930's he wrote in his Notebooks: "I left my capacity for hoping on the little roads that led to Zelda's sanitarium."

Scott Fitzgerald had nothing to teach Jane Bowles about sadness; although twenty-one years younger than Fitzgerald, she had already suffered much by the time Fitzgerald entered his lament about lost hopes. The death of her father and an operation that left her with a permanently stiffened knee had already schooled her in suffering by the early 1930's. Like Fitzgerald, she confided her thoughts to a notebook, where in the 1950's she wrote: "I have never yet enjoyed a day, but I have never stopped trying to arrange for happiness." Unlike Fitzgerald, she could not find consolation by looking back with satisfaction on a body of work guaranteed to last: she published one novel, one play and six short stories, and between 1950 and her death in 1973 she wrote scarcely at all. Fitzgerald's fame has grown since his death; not many people have even heard of Jane Bowles, much less read her work.

Jane Bowles suffered some of the same psychic disabilities that plagued Fitzgerald. New York City and Long Island —the settings for her childhood—gave her no sense of place. Family she had: her mother's many sisters, with the attendant train of cousins, enabled her to grow up with strong familial ties, but after her marriage to Paul Bowles in 1938 she largely severed the cords of kinship. Her Jewishness touched her little, either as an historic identity with a people or as a faith in Yahweh's promises to his chosen nation. She could not use her Jewishness either as a weapon to ward off her demons or as an agony that could be transformed into great art.

Scott and Zelda's marriage followed a fairly conventional route to ruin: two self-centered, immature young people who worked out their frustrations on one another. Jane's marriage to the composer and writer Paul Bowles took a more bizarre turn. Even before her marriage to Paul, Jane had opted for lesbianism, a compulsion that drove her to one-night stands and sordid affairs. Paul Bowles was not able to give Jane the security of a stable union; he believed in freedom in marriage, and his artistic sensibility led him into a preoccupation with the perverse and the degraded. Paul did not cause Jane's problems—perhaps did not even exacerbate them—but if one could have selected an ideal mate for Jane, it surely would not have been a man of whom Norman Mailer wrote: "Paul Bowles opened the world of Hip. He let in the murder, the drugs, the incest, the death of the Square . . . the call of the orgy, the end of civilization." Jane and Paul remained married until her death, but Jane never found in their union —she may not have wanted to find—the

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security that might have provided some balance in her crazily tilted world.

Despite Scott Fitzgerald's deeply rooted psychological maladies, he presents a portrait of mental hygiene when compared to Jane Bowles. Mercifully, Millicent Dillon veers away from the allurements of psychobiography; still, one does not need to truck out Freud, Jung and their epigones to recognize a deep self-hatred festering in Jane Bowles. She apparently reveled in the degradation afforded by her lesbian affairs, and on occasion she referred to herself as "Crippie, the Kike Dyke." The mind-probers would have a field day with this, but Miss Dillon has uncovered something more profound than the clever theories of psychiatry:

> From the time she was a child Jane had had the sense of sin—a sin that she could never define except to say that it was hers and original, that which separated her from others. Her life had been spent in the doubleness of the knowledge of that sin and the evasion of the knowledge . . . For years she had spoken about sin and salvation—no one understood it.

Miss Dillon does not understand it either; she refuses to consider that Jane's guilt arose from that "sin shared by all human beings as a consequence of the Fall." Miss Dillon's own words belie her denial: the phrase "that which separated her from others" contains the solution to Jane Bowles's anguish. What else does the Christian concept of original sin mean if not precisely that, the deep wound in man that cuts him off from God and isolates him from his fellow human beings? But Jane Bowles understood what Millicent Dillon cannot fathom: lying near death in Malaga, Spain—blind, unconscious at times and only intermittently able to speak—she converted to Roman Catholicism. She found at the last moment what Scott Fitzgerald had casually tossed aside.

Regardless of the fascination that the lives of Scott Fitzgerald and Jane Bowles hold for biographers and their readers, the importance of these two authors lies ultimately in their work. Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* alone continues to sell 300,000 copies a year: he may be the most widely read American novelist of the 20th century (excluding, of course, those authors who traffic in trash). Fitzgerald is good—very good—and if doubters still exist, they had best read a story like "Babylon Revisited," or turn to the concluding paragraphs of *The Great Gatsby* with their coruscating words of hope, of yearning and of loss. Fitzgerald told the truth: that "epic grandeur" which enabled him to fuse image, artistry and plot into his best novels and stories will strike a chord in readers so long as we have people who care about the best of American literature.

Fitzgerald can scarcely be escaped; Jane Bowles must be sought out by those willing to go beyond the big names. One fears that Millicent Dillon's biography may have deleterious effects: the kinkiness of Bowles's life may attract literary necrophiliacs rather than serious readers. Even worse, feminists may try to transmogrify Jane Bowles into a martyr to womanhood, a female writer somehow silenced by the oppressiveness of American society. That would be a sad fate for a woman who deserves better.

We shall never know what Bowles had in her: she wrote so little under such trying circumstances. Her writings do not easily surrender their meaning, for her characters are a curious lot whose minds work through ellipses, discontinuities and hiatuses. A nameless sin—all the more mysterious because of its namelessness—hovers over these strange people, and their urge toward expiation and salvation stops dead before the blackness of the void. Bowles's people remind one of those odd, disjointed creatures who fill Flannery O'Connor's pages, but with one crucial difference: Bowles's freaks move in a world bereft of God's grace. *Two Serious Ladies*—her sole novel—will never sell 300,000 copies a year, but on the evidence of his book, along with the stories collected in *Plain Pleasures* and the play *In the Summer House,* one might venture far out onto a limb that any number of critics would gladly saw off. It may be that Jane Bowles understood better than Scott Fitzgerald the sorrow and separation that dwell at the heart of man's anguish. Enmeshed in her own solipsistic suffering, she captured perfectly the plight of 20th-century man in isolation from his God: "There comes a moment when there is no possibility of escape, as if the spirit were a box hitting at the walls of the head." Scott Fitzgerald, eternal romanticist, never ceased to look for a way out, and in that respect the acuteness of his perception never matched that of Jane Bowles. But then Fitzgerald had relinquished as a young man the key that opens the door of escape, a key that Jane Bowles grasped tightly in her hand on that day in May of 1973 when she died. □

Justice in America

Jack Abbott, the bestial slaughterer of a young, unarmed man, has been found guilty not of murder but of manslaughter. A jury composed of New Yorkers chose to convict him of the lesser crime. Perhaps they were influenced by Abbott's guardian angel, writer Norman Mailer, who attended the court proceedings wearing a fashionable $400 trench coat (which, in the ethos of New York's countless Mailers, is enshrined as "Action Wear"—a badge of modish alertness), and who believes that even the most heinous crime committed by a juvenile delinquent is a religious, thus edifying, experience. There's no doubt that Mr. Mailer's intervention and testimony on the defendant's behalf helped to free Abbott from bearing the ultimate responsibility for his actions. To our mind, then, Mr. Mailer has blood on his Burberry. But he does not notice it—like most card-carrying radicals, he's colorblind. □

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The Importance of Being Empty

Donald Barthelme: *Sixty Stories;* G.P. Putnam's Sons; New York.

by Edward J. Walsh

I know that Donald Barthelme is the author of ten other books because I read the publisher's press release which came with my copy—I was not previously familiar with his work. From the press release I learned also that his books have been translated into many languages, that he received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1967 and the National Book Award in 1972, and that he has taught at several universities. I wondered, after discovering all this, whether I would be able to review his writing just as if I knew nothing about him. I concluded that I would. After all, publishers' press releases have only one aim, and that is to encourage positive reviews. Anyway, I had read most of *Sixty Stories* before seeing the release; my impressions were already ingrained in my sensibilities. Barthelme's writing has a way of making one forget Barthelme's credentials. His work might be called Kafkaesque in that it rivets the reader with a sense of the *unreal,* or tries to. There is a gamble involved in this kind of writing: the attempt to leave the reader unsettled will either be effective, as it is with Kafka, or it will result in a shower of gibberish. Barthelme's "Will You Tell Me?" and "Alice," among others, end up as gibberish because he takes a tired, threadbare theme such as adultery and tries, unsuccessfully, to make an ironic statement about it. Maybe a sense of pain and pathos is supposed to be there. It should be. But if it is, it is buried in a torrent of emotionless paragraphs that leave one, well, uninterested. Perhaps that's the point.

In "Report" and "Game" Barthelme preaches on social issues, Vietnam and nuclear war. In the former he satirizes the absolute faith in technology of the Whiz Kids who ran the Pentagon in the 60's, who believed that fancy new weapons would certainly win the war. Says the chief engineer:

> We could, of course, release in the arena of the upper air our new improved pufferfish toxin which produces an identity crisis. No special technical problems there. We could of course place up to two million maggots in their rice within twenty four hours. The maggots are ready, massed in secret staging areas in Alabama. We have a family of fishes trained to attack their fishes. We have a green substance that, well, I'd rather not talk about.

This stuff is funny. Barthelme is, at times, a witty writer. Perhaps I say so because I believe that smug confidence in technology deserves to be ridiculed; I do believe that. But "Game" is equally hilarious, although Barthelme's point, that readiness for nuclear war is absurd, is one of the more obvious reasons for the left-liberal paralysis of our age. In "Game," two U.S. strategic-missile watch officers are mistakenly left on duty for 133 days. One plays jacks to pass the time, and the other writes descriptions of natural forms on the walls—a leaf, a stone, animals, a baseball bat. They behave "strangely." The piece is funny, its bizarreness utterly tongue-in-cheek. But, like Barthelme's tired sentiment, it is also *pointlessly* absurd, a venture into the unreal that actually begins in the unreal, a fantasy world that contains no Soviet Union, no missiles aimed at the United States.

Obviously, sixty samples of Barthelme's work are a lot to digest. As is the case with most collections of short fiction, *Sixty Stories* is mainly the accumulation of pieces published elsewhere. The arrangement of stories is not clearly chronological; it may indeed be, but there seems to be no conscious order. The worst way to approach this kind of book is to read it from cover to cover. Barthelme's writing doesn't lend itself easily to the expectation that what follows explains what went before. Often his second paragraphs have nothing to do with his openings.

It would be too much to say that Barthelme is attempting to duplicate Joyce's stream-of-consciousness meanderings. But he certainly aspires to fit into *some* literary tradition, perhaps one whose first aim is to innovate with language, as in "The Falling Dog":

> dirty and clean dogs
> ultraclean dogs, laboratory animals
> thrown or flung dogs
> in series, Indian file

—and so on. There is a tradition of this sort of thing in English letters, ever since John Donne's disciple, George Herbert, built his poems into the shapes of things he wrote about, and e.e. cummings startled people by eschewing capitalization.

Barthelme drifts here and there; "The Balloon" is punctuated by hints of how Barthelme views criticism: "There was a certain amount of argumentation about the 'meaning' of the balloon; this subsided because we have learned not to insist on meanings, and they are rarely even looked for now, except in cases involving the simplest, safest phenomena." And indeed, criticism of literature can't be limited to the weary search for "meaning" in which we all dissected *The Lord of the Flies* in high school: a symbol for this, a symbol for that. Rather, one must read a work and ask himself: *Why* did I enjoy (or dislike) this? Looking at Barthelme's stories from this perspective, I sense a tinge of fraud. Here is a man who can write, but who works terribly hard at keeping the reader off guard and does little else. The form overpowers the substance; the form *is* the substance, which leaves us with a sneaking suspicion that

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Barthelme is playing games with words and ideas—as if they were pasted on some sort of constantly revolving roulette wheel of artistic sensibility from which he plucks at random. Barthelme's is an agile kind of writing, but an empty one. There is little meat on these bones. Instead, there is a depressing flood of gobbledygook that almost totally obscures his few gems of comic writing.

All this would be fine, if Barthelme were merely running the risk of having his few readable pieces ignored, as is the bulk of his work. But then one recalls the social comment that runs through more than a few of these stories. That would be all right, too, for *Sixty Stories* covers twenty years of work, and there were plenty of writers, particularly in the 60's, who stuck their political views into their literary efforts, even when the results were awful. Barthelme's version isn't that bad, but it is awkward enough to make one wonder how he expects his readers to see his other pieces. Should they, too, be considered profound and serious? It's easy to envision Barthelme secretly guffawing at readers who squint over his work like avant-garde intellectuals staring at a canvas of spattered tomatoes in a "modern art" museum, holding forth on what it means.

What it means is not much. *Sixty Stories* is a hen house full of raucous and discordant prose pieces which can hardly be considered stories. To titillate pompous critics and dodge the sentiments of readers may be a good excuse for quirky experiments with language, but one wouldn't call the result literature.

Barthelme's view of what he is doing filters through in a strangely straightforward way in "The Dolt," a piece about an aspiring writer who continually fails the written part of the "National Writers Examination":

> [Edgar] couldn't think of anything. Thinking of anything was beyond him. I sympathize. I myself have these problems. Endings are elusive, middles are nowhere to be found, but worst of all is to begin, to begin, to begin.

Barthelme tries, anyway. *Sixty Stories*, and more, is the result. Some of them are entertaining. But none of them is memorable. □

The Villager's Voice

Margaret Brenman-Gibson: *Clifford Odets, American Playwright: The Years from 1906 to 1940;* Atheneum Publishers; New York.

by Lee Congdon

Who can forget Saul Steinberg's wonderful impression of United States geography? Having appeared originally on the cover of *The New Yorker,* it represents the world west of the Hudson River as a narrow strip of land all but crowded from view by Manhattan. Even those who live in this uncharted territory are amused by the drawing because of what it reveals about New York intellectuals, many of whom do form a nation apart. For these men and women, life outside of New York would constitute an unendurable exile, in large measure because they possess very little sense of belonging to America, a land that is populated—if forums such as the *New York Review of Books, The New Yorker* and the *New York Times* are to be believed—by philistine businessmen and imprisoned spirits. New Yorkers imagine themselves to be on the side of liberation, uncompromising enemies of the stultifying and outmoded conventions of provincial life. To live in New York is thus to celebrate the possibilities of the future and to decry the burden of the past. That is why New York intellectuals are so receptive to ideas and ideologies that promise a world in which limits are no longer recognized.

Among those American writers whose work mirrors this ideal-typical Weltanschauung is the subject of this exhaustive authorized biography. Clifford Odets was born in Philadelphia in 1906 to a family of Russian-Jewish immigrants, but soon moved to the Bronx. Later, when his parents returned to Philadelphia, his "sense of asphyxiation was made more acute by the contrast between the avant-garde intellectual ferment and freedom of New York's Greenwich Village and the polite, well-padded small talk of even literate Philadelphians, many of whom were still opposing Whitman's poetry as 'coarse.'" Worshiping Whitman as he did, and admiring such legendary habitués of the Village as John Reed, Max Eastman, Emma Goldman, Theodore Dreiser and—especially—Eugene O'Neill, Odets naturally chose New York City over the backwater of Philadelphia.

Captivated by the theater at an early age, Odets dropped out of high school to seek his fortune on the legitimate stage. After several years of indifferent success, he joined the Group Theatre organized in 1931 by Harold Clurman and Lee Strasberg. Influenced by Russian directors such as Stanislavsky and Meyerhold, these talented men sought to bring a new seriousness and intensity to the American stage, disdaining (for a time) commercial success. The zeal they inspired in the members of their company was not, however, merely professional. For Odets and his comrades the Group was at once an adoptive family, a way of life and a commitment to the future. Out of this crucible of family loves, jealousies and hostilities, there emerged several actors of distinction, including John Garfield, Elia Kazan and Lee J. Cobb. Frustrated by his failure to compete successfully with performers of this stamp, Odets began in the early 1930's to write plays

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during his enforced leisure time.

It was by now the middle of the 30's and the Jazz Age had long since made way for what Eugene Lyons called the Red Decade. The Depression and the rise of fascism had created in many American writers a new social and political awareness that was easily exploited by the small but self-assured Communist Party. When recounting his recruitment to the Party in Germany, Arthur Koestler recalled that "the contrast between the downward trend of capitalism and the simultaneous steep rise of planned Soviet economy was so striking and obvious that it led to the equally obvious conclusion: They are the future—we, the past." Lured by the future, Odets joined the Party in 1934 and, equipped with a ready-made ideology, set down in three nights the play for which he is still chiefly remembered: *Waiting for Lefty*. Based on a New York taxi-driver strike, *Lefty* was a one-act "agitprop" piece designed to radicalize the audience. The play revolves around a handful of desperate drivers who are convinced that they have been sold out by their union leaders and who call upon the rank and file—the audience—to revolt. When news arrives that Lefty, the leader of the insurgents, has been murdered, cries of "strike" ring out first from the stage and then from the audience, the members of which experienced what Malcolm Cowley recently described as "a sense of release, a dream of brotherhood."

Overnight, Odets became the literary left's man of the hour, praised extravagantly as an American Chekhov or Sean O'Casey. In his next play, *Awake and Sing!*, he was even more explicit about his communist sympathies, writing for the prophetical grandfather Jacob a celebration of Soviet Russia, where "they got Marx." In this way he solidified a political reputation that undermined his subsequent work and targeted him for a different kind of notoriety during the 1950's, when the House Un-American Activities Committee was in its heyday.

Although he lived into the 1960's, Odets never repeated his early and stunning theatrical triumphs. His biographer delights in attributing this failure to his mercenary decision to write screenplays for Hollywood, but the unhappy truth is that he, like most of those who crowd the pages of Daniel Aaron's excessively sympathetic *Writers of the Left*, was always a second-rate writer. His short-lived success can be accounted for by his ear for New York Jewish dialect and by contemporary receptivity to communist propaganda, particularly in New York where journals of opinion such as *The New Republic, The New Masses, The Nation* and *Partisan Review* (then the organ of the John Reed Clubs) were energetically disseminating radical ideas. By the time Odets left the Party in 1935, his political interest had already begun to flag, and it quickly became evident that he had nothing more to say, a man with chronic third-act problems.

Only at the end of the decade was Odets able to put his finger on what had initially attracted him to communism: the promise of the future. "Notice a curious fact," he wrote in his notebooks, "the American men have no past, no present, only a future. They have no memory; the present irks them because all of the possibilities and expansions of their lives are not in it; only the future do they live for." Civilization would not flourish on this side of the Atlantic, he concluded with some regret, until Americans learned to love the past. And for once he was right. Because the past is concrete and authentic in a way that the future can never be, those who love it signal at the same time their love of men as they are and have been. A literature informed by historical consciousness is always more profound and humane than one with its creative eyes on the future and its idealized inhabitants. What Odets does *not* say is that many of his greater contemporaries did revere the past; one has only to think of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, William Faulkner, Allen

LIBERAL CULTURE

Cliché Man

A certain Edward Asner, a second-rate TV performer who specializes in cliché typology, has recently launched a campaign to aid San Salvador's communist guerrillas. He is on record as saying about the predicament of the Salvadoreans:

> I do not favor communism anywhere. But if they choose communism, so be it.

Here we are again: ignorance posing as compassion and political fairness. Mr. Asner's stance will be promoted by the liberal press, and it will wind up with American foreign policy being decided in the streets by inebriated mobs of obscurantist adolescents. Just like the 60's. The fact that his line is an insult to basic intelligence and knowledge, since there's not one speck of earth on which communism has been chosen by the people rather than imposed by the violent action of a well-organized few—Russia included—means nothing to the Asners of the world. They will forever defend America's conscience with the pious approval of the pro-Bolsheviks in the press and in the spotlights of the ignoramuses from the evening news. □

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Tate, Robert Penn Warren, John Crowe Ransom and Donald Davidson, no one of whom, to be sure, was a New Yorker.

As his interest in political theater declined, Odets turned more and more to psychological themes. Mrs. Gibson speaks of his "struggle to unite in his work a world-view that would integrate the radical insights of Marx and Freud . . ." a struggle that was and is common among New York intellectuals, particularly, as Norman Podhoretz has observed, among those of Jewish descent. Herself a psychoanalyst and protégée of Erik H. Erikson, Mrs. Gibson is fascinated by Odets's self-absorption and proposes to offer a psychological interpretation of his "life-history." Throughout this long volume, which takes Odets only to 1940, the focus rarely shifts away from the playwright's internal life. Indeed, we are spared no detail, however intimate and seemingly irrelevant, on the apparent assumption that *every* psychic moment is pregnant with meaning. The upshot of this searching examination, according to Mrs. Gibson, is that Odets suffered throughout his life from an unresolved identity crisis. Simultaneously repulsed by and attracted to his domineering businessman father and his submissive mother, he was never able to integrate contradictory "identity-elements" into a unified personality. As late as the early 1950's, after his belligerent but ultimately cooperative appearance before HUAC, he was still pathetically uncertain of himself: "Personal clarity, in my opinion, is the first law of the day," he wrote at the time, "that plus a true and real search for personal identity." All of Odets's plays, Mrs. Gibson insists, reflect his semi-conscious struggle for some sort of psychological equilibrium.

By no means a crude simplifier, Mrs. Gibson is right, I think, to call attention to the importance of biography in any hermeneutic strategy. But despite repeated assurances that she is not engaged in a reductionist enterprise, she seems to believe that an exhaustive explanation of creativity is, in principle, within our grasp. "We are still," she writes with unconvincing diffidence, "a long way from being able to describe positively in any detail what are the 'necessary and sufficient' conditions which transform a stale effort at mastering an unconscious conflict—or expressing an unconscious fantasy—into a creative one which formally and emotionally satisfies the playwright and 'speaks to' an audience." Her reading of Odets's plays always presupposes the *necessary* character of the link between creativity and unconscious conflict; art as neurosis if you will. The approach yields an occasional insight when the subject is someone as unstable as Odets, but there is no justification for assuming its universal validity. On the contrary, art—because it is *unnatural*—is by definition the realization of pre-eminently conscious aims.

Less troubling but equally distracting is Mrs. Gibson's habit of dressing out common sense in the attire of science. She demonstrates repeatedly, for example, what must be obvious to the dullest mind almost from the first page: Odets harbored ambivalent feelings for his overbearing father. At one point, she cannot resist letting us in on a scintillating secret: "the essential identity of the director as 'parent'—in contrast to the actor as 'child'—has often been observed by clinicians." Sometimes, on the other hand, her explanations are so hedged about with qualification, so theoretically dense, that one is not quite certain that *anything* is being said.

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture:*

History & Life

"It is not necessarily the subjects of . . . books that make them so irritating. After all, great writers—from the Greek tragedians to Graham Greene and Saul Bellow—have effectively used revenge, murder, violence, alienation and sex in their work. But they have done so with the assumption that somewhere beyond the immediate horror is a context of values which gives significance to the trauma. Literary sex and violence outside such a moral context produces nothing more than an ephemeral tickling of the senses."

from "Terminally Naive"
by Robert C. Steensma

"Let us assume that in the future some scholar will wish to write an objective history of the 1960's and the 1970's in America. . . . The most difficult problem such an historian will face in understanding these two decades will be this: How did it happen that, during that epoch, such a large number of people with low ethical and moral standards and transparently self-interested and destructive motives managed to pass themselves off as the moral leaders and benefactors of society?"

from "The Enemy Up Close"
by Clyde Wilson

Also:

Opinions & Views—Commendables—In Focus
Waste of Money—Perceptibles
The American Proscenium—Stage—Screen—Art
Music—Correspondence—Liberal Culture
Journalism—Social Register—Polemics & Exchanges

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Still, Mrs. Gibson rightly emphasizes Odets's own psychological preoccupations. Later plays such as *Golden Boy* and *Rocket to the Moon* are far more concerned with ego release than with economic or political liberation, with Freud rather than with Marx. It is in fact arguable that from the first, communism functioned for Odets, as it did for numerous members of his and subsequent generations, as a solution to personal problems, a way of wiping the slate clean and creating conditions in which an entirely new person might emerge unburdened by the weight of the past and by the limitations of existence and circumstance. Against such illusions Southern writers, at least, have long been inoculated. "We have had our Fall," Flannery O'Connor once observed. "We have gone into the modern world with an inburnt knowledge of human limitations and with a sense of mystery which could not have developed in our first state of innocence—as it has not sufficiently developed in the rest of our country." She might well have added: especially not in New York. □

The Acceptance of Nothingness and Nobodies

John Updike: *Rabbit Is Rich;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

Thomas Berger: *Reinhart's Women;* Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence; New York.

by Betsy Clarke

White, middle-aged Protestant males have been out of style for some time. Though never precisely articulated, cultural sentiment suggests that this overprivileged bunch is not what it used to be — and probably never was. Sociologists now tell us that Asian and South American immigrants possess more drive. Catholics and Jews demonstrate more intelligence. Women own more of the nation's wealth and all of its virtue. Though they continue to sit at the head of our government, Protestant white males are portrayed on film and television primarily as nazis or slave owners (or their moral equivalent) or, at the other extreme, psychotic weaklings. Modern literature makes reference to them mostly as the oafs who drove their ex-wives to therapy and ruin. Broadway ignores them completely.

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But hark! John Updike and Thomas Berger have brought forth further episodes in the lives of two of America's allegedly best-loved fictional characters: Harry (Rabbit) Angstrom and Carlo (Carl) Reinhart. Though neither is any latter-day George Washington or Abraham Lincoln, the white, now middle-aged, Protestant Angstrom and Reinhart have been endowed with engaging personalities, intelligence and even a redeeming social value or two. Firmly entrenched in the problems of middle age—namely grown, maladjusted children— they nevertheless have acquired a serenity that eluded them in their youth. The libido isn't quite the presence it once was, and certain inhibitions have fallen by the wayside.

Updike's straight narrative and Berger's sustained irony display distinct styles; the authors' characters have reached different stations in life. Yet the form and substance of the protagonists' stories overlap in some intriguing ways. Both Rabbit and Reinhart are the nicest, most interesting people their authors present. Though capable of ethnic humor à la Mike Wallace, they are remarkably free of prejudiced ill will, and each has had a close relationship with a black contemporary, now deceased. Both have been too dependent on the largess of family members, and neither has been an exemplary husband or parent. Neither is college educated. The lives of both have been directed by women. ("What're you going to do when you run out of women to tell you what to do?" Rabbit asks his son. "Same thing you'll do. Drop dead," Nelson replies.) Half a century of living notwithstanding, neither Rabbit nor Reinhart achieves any real independence until the conclusion of these chronicles.

Then too, the world they see now is not as nice as the world they once knew. Values have eroded (not without help from the protagonists, incidentally), downtowns have decayed, "the world is running out of gas." So the characters spend a fair amount of time looking backward. The Angstrom household television is tuned mostly to reruns. Reinhart shows respect for has-been movie actor Jack Buxton, now a rumored pervert, since in his films he "embodied the old-fashioned virtues until both he and they went out of fashion, to be replaced by nothing and nobody worth mentioning." Updike and Berger portray a world of changed rules, a society without structure: every man for himself.

> "... it is difficult [for Updike] to make exciting fiction out of the compromises—or the decencies—of maturity."
>
> ***—London Times Literary Supplement***

In the end, they accept the world of nobodies and give absolution to nothingness. As everyone knows, we're not in Kansas anymore.

Rabbit Is Rich, the third of the Rabbit Angstrom novels, is actually a misnomer. Angstrom, who, thanks to his wife's inheritance, runs a Toyota dealership, makes not quite $50,000 a year—a healthy sum, certainly, but not the kind of bread required for the purchase of,

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say, a compound in Hyannisport. Still, to the son of a printer, life is luxurious beyond his youthful dreams when "his idea of destiny was to move away and marry a girl from another town." Now he belongs to a tacky country club and is vacationing in the Caribbean (his first trip), dropping $300 in a casino in one night. But his ascetic background haunts him. "Poor Pop," Harry thinks. "He didn't live to see money get unreal."

Other aspects of Rabbit's life are equally ambiguous. Caught in middle age between his ancestors and his progeny, he finally seeks independence from both. To the older generation he owes his business, his fortune, his shelter. He lives with his mother-in-law and wife in her family home and, without fail, vacations at her family's summer home in the Poconos. The Toyota dealership, though owned jointly by his wife and his mother-in-law, is under his control. He is luckier than his employee Charlie, who has worked longer and harder than Rabbit has, and whom his wife and mother-in-law will remove to make room for his son, Nelson, the hot-tempered college dropout. Like his father, whom he hates but from whom he cannot cut loose, Nelson has impregnated one of his girlfriends, who insists on marriage. And, like his father, he wants his rightful place in the dealership, to live in the family home and to vacation at the family cottage. Balks Harry, at the implications, "Look at me. I don't want him to live my life. I'm living it and that's enough." But the son to whom Rabbit has given money, travel, college, comes home. "I haven't thumbed my nose, it's just that there's not that much out there," Nelson whines, as only an overindulged college student can.

In the end, Rabbit gains some integrity. Charlie replaces Nelson at the dealership, Rabbit and his wife buy a home of their own and they vacation at a resort in the sun. Finally a new generation of Angstrom begins. Nelson's baby—a girl—is born right after Nelson runs back to college without his wife. Muses Rabbit, "Fortune's hostage, heart's desire, a granddaughter. His. Another nail in his coffin. His."

Altogether, Updike presents us with a fine performance. It is difficult to imagine 95% of the novel being improved upon. But something must be said about that 5%, the portion known in the fifth grade as "the dirty parts," especially Updike's fond descriptions of the kinky, adulterous Caribbean wife-swapping capers. These scenes are not objectionable because they are disgusting, which they are, by the way, but because they are distracting. Readers should be given better things to do than ponder the severity of the author's own midlife crisis.

Thomas Berger's sustained irony is a style that few authors use well. Whether heavy-handed or badly paced, highly mannered prose too often lapses into tedium. Berger usually gets the balance right and, unlike Updike, he can distill some truths about modern life without offending a reader's sensibilities.

Fourth novel of the Reinhart series that began with *Crazy in Berlin* in 1958, *Reinhart's Women* chronicles the aging of unemployed, divorced, fastidious Carl Reinhart, father of two. Since his divorce he has been keeping house for his daughter Winona, a successful, small-city model. Cooking has become his passion, and Berger's descriptions of Carl's recipes punctuate his narrative with delightful alliterative detail: "Reinhart placed a dozen and a half of the button mushrooms in a colander and plunged the perforated vessel into a potful of cool water." Little does Reinhart know that his date, Grace Greenwood, is in fact his daughter's lover. The revelation jars him, but then this is a society where parking lots are jammed with "sensible, neat, economical vehicles manufactured by former enemies of the United States" and people eat at restaurants named "Chinky Chow Mein." Then, too, "at almost hourly intervals he was reminded of how harmless had been the time of his own youth: the most vicious types of that era would today qualify as the most wholesome of citizens."

Such is life that Grace, a food-industry executive, gets him a few minutes on morning television to demonstrate his cooking skills. When fellow guest Buxton has a heart attack in the television station men's room, Reinhart is asked to fill in Buxton's allotted time. By the end of the story, Reinhart is negotiating for a regular TV slot, and for the first time in his life, he sees myriad opportunities for fulfillment and success. Whether any of it materializes is the stuff of a fifth Reinhart novel. For now, Berger is content to explore life's daily convolutions, not the least of which is that, were it not for his daughter's homosexuality and a man's death, Reinhart's future would look infinitely bleaker. "Funny how the worst could happen before one knew it —and turn out not to be the worst, after all," he muses.

Contradictions are everywhere. It is also revealed that Reinhart's son, a successful, tightfisted stockbroker, "would have liked nothing better than to be a fighter pilot or hero at hand-to-hand combat" during his college years as a war protester. Reinhart's unstable ex-wife now wants a reunion: "Carl, if you had always been the mean son of a bitch you've turned into in your old age, I'd probably have stuck by you," she tells Reinhart on her departure. Public morality, general irresponsibility, the quality of college educations and the media are all skillfully satirized in Berger's novel. But perhaps the perplexity of the human condition he probes is best summarized by Reinhart himself, who "had wondered all his life which made the more sense: *Ignorance is bliss,* or *The truth will make you free.* There was something to be said for both."

Those of a more complex ideological persuasion might have hoped for a more ambitious novel. *Reinhart's Women* is perhaps too full of whimsy and lost opportunities. Still, a sardonic romp through our culture remains a delicacy, and Berger's analysis is no less deft for being a little daft. □

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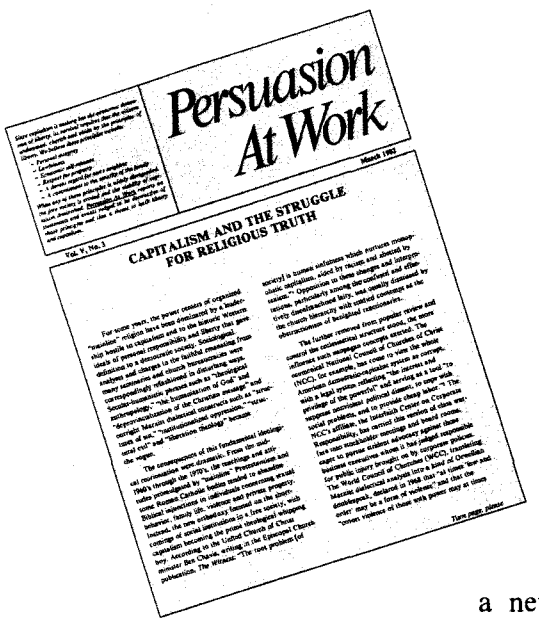
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March 1982

CAPITALISM AND THE STRUGGLE FOR RELIGIOUS TRUTH

Vol. V, No. 3

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Stuffed Men & Wear 'n' Wash Women

Daniel Yankelovich: *New Rules: Searching for Self-Fulfillment in a World Turned Upside Down;* Random House; New York.

Daniel Offer, Eric Ostrov, Kenneth I. Howard: *The Adolescent: A Psychological Self-Portrait;* Basic Books, New York.

by Thomas J. Fleming

These are times that try men's bodies, if not their souls. In every state of our republic we hear tales of men and women renouncing families and occupations to pursue their dreams of "fulfillment." The dreams take on the concrete form of sexual experimentation, "alternate lifestyles," or the more innocent infatuation with what used to be called hobbies. Consider a few examples:

> The college professor whose dreams of prestige and security have gone unrealized and his no less discontented wife who has begun to dream of liberation—for both, California, with its free way of life, has become a code word for escape from frustration. Unable to make the switch to a West Coast Think Tank, he becomes morose, while she embraces feminism and a feminist with whom she runs away to lead a new life.
>
> A young married couple in which the wife outearns the husband—they have postponed children in the interests of the wife's career, and because of the insecurity of their marriage both indulge in extramarital affairs.
>
> A woman who divorces her husband, opens a restaurant with the settlement, and fulfills a lifelong dream.

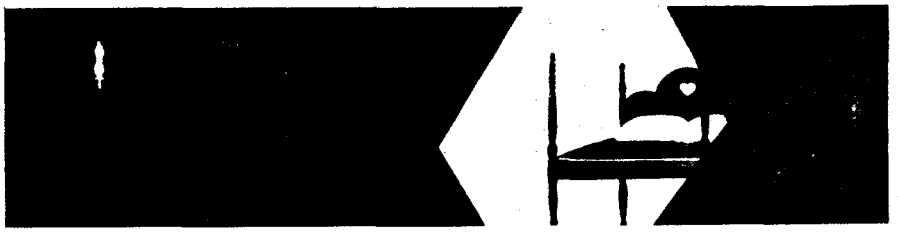
These are some of the people in *New Rules,* by Daniel Yankelovich, of the polling firm of Yankelovich, Skelly & White, Inc. Yankelovich offers a gallery of such characters in a book that combines the statistical survey with the method of individual profile made popular by Studs Terkel. His theme is the "search for self-fulfillment," which —we are assured—permeates all "Western history and literature." In our time the search takes the form of:

> A poignant and inchoate yearning to elevate . . . the 'sacred' expressive aspects of their lives, and simultaneously, to downgrade the impersonal, manipulative.

By this, he apparently means that jogging, erotic experiments and career changes are more than hobbies and whims: they are the religious rituals of a people that has given up its faith in more conventional objects of piety.

Some of Yankelovich's profiles are telling, but his actual strength lies in survey evaluation. He works statistical magic to discover a significant minority, the 17% of working Americans who put "their personal self-fulfillment high above all other concerns." They are a familiar group: younger than average, more likely to be professionals and less likely to be married or own their own homes; a majority describe themselves as liberal. They enjoy thinking about themselves, trying out ethnic and natural foods and reading books "to help me understand myself better." They appear to be more susceptible to the attractions of introspection, TM and psychotherapy, and they are obsessed with the condition of their bodies. They are, in other words, the supporting cast of a Woody Allen movie. This 17% elite is setting the trend for a shift in American attitudes on a broad set of social and moral questions—what pop psychologists call "values." The majority of Americans now seem to believe that it is acceptable for financially secure married women to work (74% as opposed to 25% in 1938), that the ideal number of children in a family is two (rather than 4), that premarital sex and interracial marriages are not "morally wrong."

Yankelovich regards our change, of course, as a case of shifting norms, without distinguishing among the wide spectrum of norms—from the ballet of forks and spoons, the ritual of calling cards and invitations that constitute a code of formal manners—all the way to the basic rules for the survival of our species: maternal care, territorial defense, male dominance. In between the idiosyncrasies of formal manners and what Sophocles' Antigone called "the unwritten and unfailing laws of the gods" lie all those traditions and habits that make a culture what it is: everything from the distribution of sexual roles to the rhythms of music. Yankelovich fails to see the dangers inherent in the alteration of our cultural patterns. He possesses the thoroughly modern faith (shared by his 17% elite) that it is possible to tinker with one part of life without affecting the whole—a comfortable doctrine for adul-



Mr. Fleming is editor of The Southern Partisan.

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terers. But to the objective observer of contemporaneity, culture seems rather like a seamless woven garment: once you begin to unravel a thread, it is impossible to tell where it will stop. Our social and sexual experimentation is reminiscent of De Quincey's famous declension from murder to bad manners. We begin by deceiving our wives and end up tolerating disco music and day-glo orange neckties. By now we know that liberated Americans have not confined their innovations to manners and culture. Many of their changes in attitude will require a fundamental reassessment of the most essential human bonds and relationships. The presumed right of women to marry and divorce at will, "control their own bodies" and compete with men in the work place may lead us more rapidly to C.S. Lewis's *Abolition of Man* than the suicidal folly of genetic engineers.

Yankelovich's searchers are already encountering problems, partly from the pressures of a shrinking economy. Inflation and OPEC are effective antidotes to the gospel of self-fulfillment preached by Abraham Maslow and his disciples. Yankelovich's own proposal for a way out of this crisis is to forge a new ethic of commitment:

> New rules to encourage a people to channel their creativity away from themselves and back into the concrete tasks that need doing in the new era.

It is hard to see how "an ethic of commitment" will be much help. In the first place, many of these unhappy people *are* committed, not just to themselves, but to their enthusiasms. The declining economy, however publicized, has so far affected few members of the affluent, educated classes. Inflation and lagging productivity have struck their worst blows at industrial workers who are nowhere near so likely to take up with TM and ethnic foods—unless they happen to *be* "ethnic." Yankelovich's ethic of commitment derives from the same matrix of liberalism as the search for self-fulfillment—not just the socialist liberalism of our own time, but liberalism per se.

At least since the time of Locke, we have been insisting on our individual rights. Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness are embedded in the American dream of independence. When a society is reduced to a population of competing individualists, the outcome is inevitably a repudiation of tradition, a refusal to believe in any social order that transcends the individual, and the denial of any value or obligation that might impede an individual's pursuit of happiness. Of course these rootless individualists can choose to commit themselves to a cause like nuclear disarmament or the distribution of Amway products. But the very fact of choosing turns these causes into the instruments of their own pleasure. Real commitment comes when, as in the case of St. Paul, the cause chooses the man. To be a self-made man—to pick our causes, "styles" and commitments like name-brand items in the supermarket—puts us in the position of idolaters who worship what their own hands have made. It is hard for an Aaron to take the Golden Calf seriously, and the affluent, liberated Americans Yankelovich admires so much will find the same problems with commitment as with fulfillment: they will have changed only the name and not the thing.

Yankelovich's pattern of a people groping after self-fulfillment while simultaneously losing confidence in the future is confirmed in part by *The Adolescent.* The authors, Offer, Ostrow and Howard, attempt to destroy the psychoanalytic picture of adolescence as a time of turmoil and sexual trauma. They point out, with some justification, that adolescents generally claim to feel good about themselves, their bodies and their families. Their work can best be used as a part of the accumulating dossier on the failures of psychoanalysis.

Despite their enthusiastic claims for adolescent mental health, the authors are forced to concede that: "Teenagers in the 1970's feel worse about themselves than did teenagers in the 1960's." Adolescents in the 1970's report themselves as more liable to fits of tears, anger and anxiety and as more violent and easily hurt. They also have a lower opinion of their parents. Even more disturbing is the increasing adolescent suicide rate: between 1955 and 1975 it soared by 171%; recent figures suggest as much as a 300% increase in the past twenty years.

The authors are puzzled by these changes and take refuge in the historical differences between the two decades. Our current crop of unhappy teenagers, they suggest, "experienced the turmoil of the Vietnam War and the antiwar movement, economic turbulence, and Watergate," while "the 1960's generation . . . grew up in a era . . . marked by enthusiasm and optimism." Even if Offer, Ostrow and Howard's assertion were true, it is no better than a *petitio principi:* it does not explain why this generation of teenagers should take war and scandal so seriously, much less such a war and such a scandal. They do cite, as a possible contributing cause, "the long-term trend toward a breaking down of the traditional family." They reassure themselves, however, that the evidence is unclear. Besides, "teenagers today are not more liberal in their attitudes with respect to sex than they were in the 1960's." If the kids are still giving the same answers on sex questionnaires, that does not mean that their habits have not changed. If we can judge from the rising tide of teenage pregnancies—abortions as well as births—they must be *doing* something, whether they are willing to talk about it or not. We do not need *The Adolescent's* surveys and statistics to tell us that something is wrong when we are confronted with the daily spectacle of young people taking to drugs and alcohol, indulging in ruthlessly casual promiscuity and accepting religious cults and suicide as attractive alternatives to normal life.

Part of the inadequacy of works like *The Adolescent* and *New Rules* is the authors' hopeless ignorance of every-

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thing outside their fields of specialty. Yankelovich, who is fond of sweeping allusions to all Western history and literature, fails to discover any fruitful parallels for our contemporary social ills. We are *not* the first society to experience a dissolution of norms or an obsession with self-fulfillment. Greeks of the 3rd century, who suffered from a breakdown in their social and political institutions, turned —as we are turning now—to the salvation ethics of Epicurus and the early Stoics. Similar developments in the Renaissance led to the private search for True Religion, coupled with a desperate pursuit of mysticism, witchcraft and personal gain. We have come—as other generations have come—to the times prophesied by Hesiod, when "Fathers will quarrel with children, children with fathers. . . . Men will dishonor their parents and blame them . . . and not repay them what they owe for their upbringing." What is peculiar about our own era is not the dissolution and corruption itself, but the defense of our decay (and its causes) as an ideal. Europe and America have always had "sexual revolutionaries" like Casanova, de Sade and some of the early Caesars— but they went by less pleasant names. Offer, Ostrow and Howard provide us with a Morals Scale devised to measure "the extent to which the conscience or superego has developed" and leave out any reference to sexual morality, respect for parents or personal honor. Adolescents got high marks on the Morals Scale. Yet this is the generation of kids that expresses indifference to the suicide of their friends, and who recently in California made repeated trips to view the corpse of a raped and murdered schoolmate, in company with her boastful murderer. Of course, there are still decent Americans doing their best to rear decent children. Nonetheless, from the regular reports of increased drug and alcohol abuse, criminal activity and sexual promiscuity, it is hard to escape the impression that a significant minority of adolescents are growing up with the wholesome restraint and moral character of a Caligula.

Yankelovich, to give him his due, realizes that the pursuit of self-fulfillment involves questions of ethics, but his philosophical naiveté prevents him from capitalizing on this insight. He cannot even tell us what he means by "self-fulfillment," which—if it means anything— must be an elegant variation on happiness, the basis of most ethical systems. The modern preachers of self-fulfillment—Rogers, Maslow, Fromm —share with their more recent philosophical predecessors the conviction that happiness depends on, and is a function of, the individual. Bentham put it succinctly: "The interest of the community . . . is the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it." No social or ethical doctrine could be more logical. None has been more plainly stated. None could be more false, more pregnant with ruin. Put aside the obvious anthropological objections to such an analysis and confine the question to the practical one: Does a man's happiness depend on himself? It would be hard for an honest man to answer yes. Even on Crusoe's island, our happiness, limited though it be, would be the outcome of a life of social intercourse. Without that social life, we would be worse than wild children raised by wolves. As Aristotle wrote: "man is born for citizenship."

Exactly. Man *is* born for citizenship, and any ethical system or social analysis that fails to take our political nature into account will be "born cross from the womb" and doomed to irrelevance. The solution to our social problems does not lie in wishing them away with the mock solemnity of surveys and psychology or in any new ethic of individual commitment. The old one was bad enough. If an overdose of individual freedom has poisoned the sources of our happiness, it is no wonder that so many of our people find slavery attractive. No healthy personality is capable of craving the servitude offered by Marx or the Reverend Moon. The popularity of such ideologies of servility is a symptom of our disease. Like spoiled children, we crave order and authority without realizing it. Until the West can recover its sense of community and spirit of subordination, it can expect to see little improvement in the dismal statistics that measure our hatred of ourselves and our despair of the future— terms that even Daniel Yankelovich and the authors of *The Adolescent Experience* understand: the 1.5 million abortions performed annually and the increasing rate of suicide among our youth. □

Precision Thinking in America

Mr. Tom Hayden ends his *pronunciamiento* in *The Nation* (on how to bring left-liberalism back to glory) thus:

> The test of the 1980's, and the coming Republican era, will be once again between the democracy and the narrow vision of the few.

We thought that the conservative 1980 victory *was* the triumph of the democracy over the few—like Mr. Hayden—who enforced their vision of the domestic and foreign policies over a large majority which wanted none of it, but which was benumbed (with the help of the media) by liberal humbug, bluff, hubris and outright lies. Mr. Hayden is a miserable *dirigiste*—that is, a despotic totalitarian who believes fervently that his ideals and his rhetoric make him a paladin of freedom and equal rights for all—and perhaps he actually does consider himself a spokesman for the masses rather than one of the few narrow visionaries. This certainly would lift him from the trite condition of a demagogue to that more elevated, pathetic and arch-American stance of a self-deluding cheat. □

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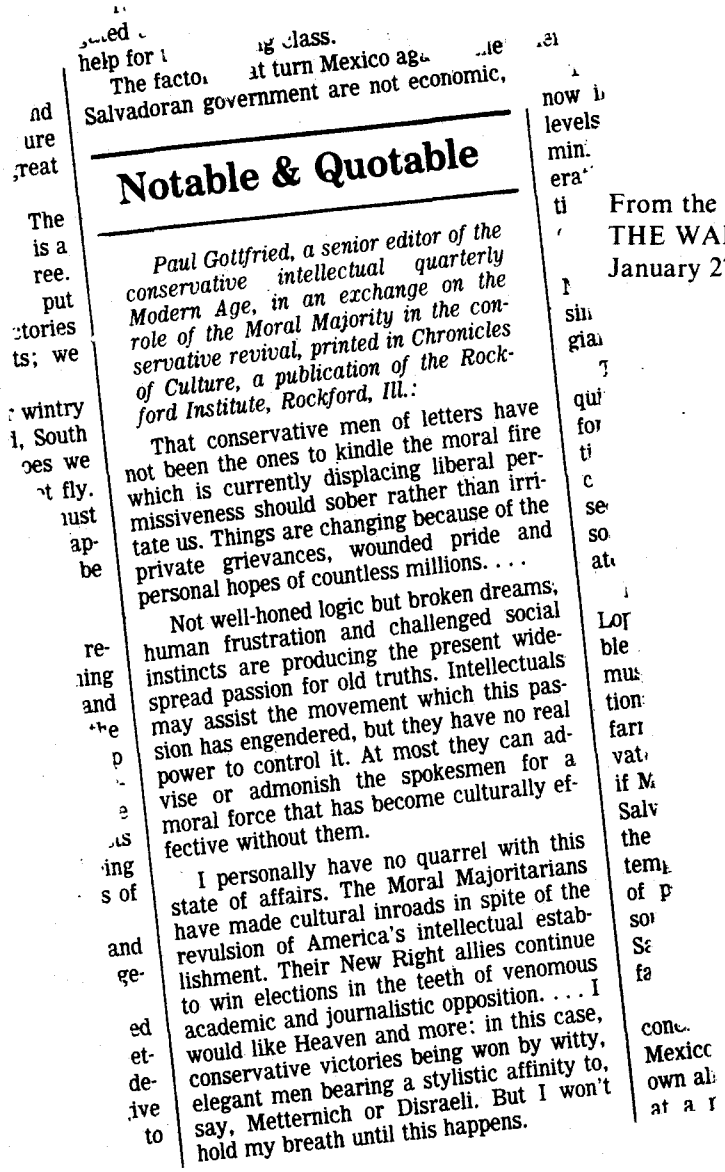

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Notable & Quotable

Paul Gottfried, a senior editor of the conservative intellectual quarterly Modern Age, in an exchange on the role of the Moral Majority in the conservative revival, printed in Chronicles of Culture, a publication of the Rockford Institute, Rockford, Ill.:

That conservative men of letters have not been the ones to kindle the moral fire which is currently displacing liberal permissiveness should sober rather than irritate us. Things are changing because of the private grievances, wounded pride and personal hopes of countless millions. . . .

Not well-honed logic but broken dreams, human frustration and challenged social instincts are producing the present widespread passion for old truths. Intellectuals may assist the movement which this passion has engendered, but they have no real power to control it. At most they can advise or admonish the spokesmen for a moral force that has become culturally effective without them.

I personally have no quarrel with this state of affairs. The Moral Majoritarians have made cultural inroads in spite of the revulsion of America's intellectual establishment. Their New Right allies continue to win elections in the teeth of venomous academic and journalistic opposition. . . . I would like Heaven and more: in this case, conservative victories being won by witty, elegant men bearing a stylistic affinity to, say, Metternich or Disraeli. But I won't hold my breath until this happens.

From the editorial page of
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
January 27, 1982

Chronicles of Culture

The above clipping was excerpted from the November/December 1981 issue of *Chronicles of Culture*. For back copies of "M.M. and the Conservative Ethos of Refinement" or Associate Editor James J. Thompson's essay on the Moral Majority, send $1.50 apiece (postage included) to *Chronicles of Culture*, 934 N. Main St., Rockford, IL 61103.

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Historians' Erotic Intensity

Barbara Tuchman: *Practicing History;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

Lawrence Stone: *The Past and the Present;* Routledge and Kegan Paul of America; Boston.

by Paul Gottfried

One is reminded, in reading Barbara Tuchman's essays, of that reproach once hurled against the French royal family: "The Bourbons neither learn nor forget anything." Like the Bourbons as depicted by their enemies, Mrs. Tuchman lives with hostilities and fixations which the years have not erased. As one surveys her *essais de circonstances,* the fruits of forty years of work, it is obvious that her phobias have grown stronger with age. She reminds one of the unfortunate example of Charles Maurras, another Teutonophobe who, like Tuchman, combined crankiness with *facilité de paroles.* Age did not mellow Maurras; instead, the infirmities of his later years, particularly his deafness, caused him to rage all the more against Germans, Protestants, Masons and, above all, Jews.

Mrs. Tuchman, too, is given to raging, and though she has managed to write decent popular history, she has done so in spite of her glaring, even grotesque, prejudices. A quintessential New York Jewish liberal, she shows the virtues and vices often associated with this identity. She is literate, widely traveled, and considers herself morally sensitive. She also seems to have taken over, perhaps unreflectively, the political eccentricities peculiar to her culture. She hates Germans and anticommunists with an almost erotic intensity.

To be fair to Mrs. Tuchman, we must admit that one can understand how a Jewish writer (especially one of German-Jewish descent) might express bitterness about German national policies under the nazi regime. Less understandable is Tuchman's apparent unwillingness to grant distinctions between nazi and prenazi German political behavior. Her intemperate attack on Imperial Germany provides a case in point. It exemplifies her view of the German people as a nation of moral pygmies led by a series of psychopaths, some of whom unleashed the First World War out of sadistic, militaristic motives. One might note that Tuchman expresses no comparable revulsion for the Russian people on the basis of Stalinist tyranny. Nowhere in her book does one find remarks about any communist dictator as vitriolic as the ones applied to Kaiser Wilhelm. Her liberal mentality may be responsible for her lopsided moral judgments. She deplores the fact that America stayed out of the struggle against Imperial Germany until 1917, but she repeatedly ascribes our bad relations with totalitarian Russia to our stubborn intolerance of political diversity.

Her essay on the Great War seeks to resurrect the dry bones of Allied war propaganda. She evokes scenes of the Kaiser's robots massacring Belgian villages, shooting the "humanitarian" nurse Edith Cavell and sinking the Lusitania and other nonmilitary vessels. Tuchman fails to cite the most recent historiography that might lend credence to her diatribe. The German historians, Fritz Fischer and Immanuel Geiss, have expounded on the annexationist designs of Imperial Germany, which they consider significant for the outbreak and course of the war. Although their arguments are deficient—e.g. they assume an undemonstrated continuity between prewar German foreign policies and wartime aims and shun any comparative study of German and Allied annexationist goals— Fischer and Geiss, unlike Tuchman, move the historical discussion beyond Teutonophobic hysteria.

Tuchman points indignantly at the inscription carved on tombstones in a Belgian cemetery, *"fusilles par les Allemands,"* without inquiring as to the circumstances surrounding the deaths in question. Were these Belgians passive victims of German brutality—or were they snipers and guerrillas who had been firing at German soldiers? Nor does Tuchman note that the Belgians would not have been forced to resist the Germans in 1914 if they had willingly allowed them to pass through their country when war broke out between Germany and France. By refusing this request when the Germans were in desperate military straits, the Belgians invited the ensuing retribution. Moreover, the British, in their military conversations with the French in 1909, had planned their own occupation of Belgium in the event of a war with Germany. Neither the Germans in action nor the British by intent showed due respect for Belgian national independence. But both sides were properly envisaging a life-and-death struggle against the enemy.

Tuchman never mentions that the Germans had reason to suspect Edith Cavell of spying for the Allies. Although their behavior toward her was ungallant to say the least, the same charge could be leveled at the Allies, with equal justification, for dispatching Mata Hari. Tuchman urges us to "Remember the Lusitania," but she also reminds us that the ship was carrying contraband arms to England at the time of the German attack. Her treatment of German submarine warfare is generally skewed. She

"The salient literary quality of [Tuchman's] 33 essays, speeches, and occasional columns is their high-buffed charm."

—*The New Republic*

Dr. Gottfried is a frequent contributor to the Chronicles.

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never reveals that England in 1914 imposed a crushing blockade on Germany, one which caused mass starvation in German cities and which the British refused to lift until the Germans signed the humiliating Treaty of Versailles. Submarine warfare was the only instrument of retaliation left to an inferior naval power fighting for its national life against Europe's maritime leader.

One must grant that America's economic and geopolitical position would have benefited less from a German victory in 1918 than from an Anglo-French one. America's commercial and cultural ties were with England far more than with Germany, and it was perhaps inevitable that America should enter the war on the Allied side. Even one who is sympathetic to Germany's ally, Austria-Hungary, can easily understand the affinity of educated Americans for the Allied cause. Less comprehensible are Tuchman's obstinate, pervasive Teutonophobia and her attempts to revive discredited war propaganda. Even more distasteful is her refusal to acknowledge the current totalitarian threat to the American people. Not only is she mute on the dangers of Soviet imperialism, but she lavishes an entire chapter of panegyrics on Mao Tse-tung. It might be said in defense of this lapse of moral judgment that it was committed back in the 70's, before the Chinese party line had changed.

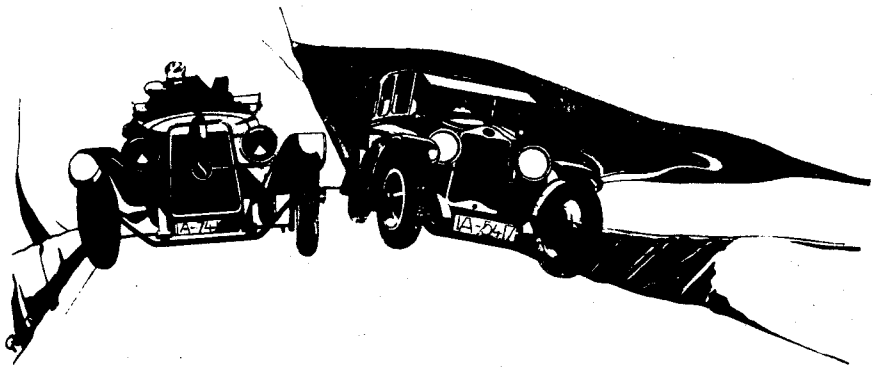
The collection of essays by Lawrence Stone, although less explicitly biased, is in some ways more disingenuous than Tuchman's book. While Tuchman states her convictions openly and even stridently, Stone reveals his politics to the reader by allusions and name-dropping. It is surprising that a social historian with an endowed chair at Princeton would play this game at all, but undoubtedly Stone is concerned about his political accreditation. He loudly bemoans the McCarthyite 50's to impress upon us the evils of 16th-century religious persecution. In discussing the bloody backlash to the Catholic aristocrats' attempt to overthrow the English government in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, Stone ostentatiously mounts his charger for political battle. He draws an opportunistic, flawed analogy between the English persecution of Catholics and modern anticommunism: "The mass hysteria generated by the Popish Plot had few historical parallels, apart from the storm whipped up by Senator Joseph McCarthy and so skillfully exploited by future President Nixon." He also reveals that he came to understand the political surveillance under Henry VIII only after watching *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*, a leftist propaganda film dealing with the German occupation of France during World War II. He twits Hugh Trevor-Roper, a conservative (read non-Marxist) historian for criticizing H.R. Tawney, a "mild Christian socialist" (read member of the left wing of the British Labor Party).

Stone proves, although unwittingly, why there is need for organized conservative dissent in the historical profession. Almost all the names and journals he cites are associated with the political left, while the few nonleftist social historians whom he does consider—Geoffrey Elton, Lewis Namier and Hugh Trevor-Roper—are made to appear more conservative than they were or are. Although Stone writes on the Reformation and the social-cultural changes in early modern Europe, he pays little attention to neo-Weberians and to those who emphasize the role of religion in producing social change.

His discussions of religion often turn out to be pretexts for self-congratulation: for example, when he praises the radical wing of the Protestant Reformation for paving the way for "an agnostic reviewer from England [who] can share the same ideals of the brotherhood of men of all classes, the equality of opportunity for men and women, and the solidarity of all races." He naturally associates the mainline Reformation with witch hunts and fear of the Devil, a perspective which allows him to vent much presentist spleen under the guise of explaining the past. According to Stone: "In this latter half of the twentieth century, we know all too well what happens when otherwise sober and prudent statesmen and rational and clear-headed intellectuals become obsessed with a Devil-theory: it blows their minds and the result is bloodshed, torture, and repression on a scale which seems hardly credible to a posterity which has freed itself from a particular mythology." To what does this convoluted passage refer? Is it to the Cultural Revolution in Maoist China, which occurred despite the supposed presence of

"An ounce of Stone being usefully wrong is worth a ton of Dryasdust telling us what we already know, or a thousand computer print-outs giving the right answers to the wrong questions."

—*The New Republic*



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"prudent statesmen" and "clear-headed intellectuals"? Or is Stone denouncing the moderate left of the 50's for supporting the Cold War? In either case, his comments are pompously self-righteous and have nothing to do with the historian's craft as it is properly understood.

It is comforting to think that conservative journals these days call attention to the vacuous pieties uttered by Stone and his ilk. It would be even nicer, however, if Stone and his cohorts felt accountable to nonleftist critics. A double standard still reigns in the academy. Rightist affiliations are often ruinous to scholars at prestigious universities, while association with explicitly leftist causes and journals brings professional advancement. While these trends may be difficult to reverse, there can be no excuse for our treating political posturing as serious scholarship. Stone and others of his breed should be castigated not only for their vacuities, but also for setting a wicked example. They are guilty of the crime for which an Athenian jury once wrongly condemned Socrates: corrupting the young. Stone's professorial success combined with his self-serving partisanship may have the unhappy effect of inviting further professional dishonesty.

Between Metaphysics & Horoscope

Michel Tournier: *Gemini;* Doubleday & Co.; New York.

by Maura Daly

The recent translation and publication of Michel Tournier's novel *Les Météores* under the English title *Gemini* will undoubtedly prompt some American critics and literati to wonder who Michel Tournier is and what has caused his phenomenal success in France.

Born in Paris on December 19, 1924, into a family of musicians and Germanists, Michel was a rather poor student in his early years, but he did excel in German and theology. As the years went on, he became an excellent student and eventually majored in philosophy at the Universities of Paris and Tübingen. Unfortunately, like his classmate Michel Butor, Tournier did not pass the *agrégation* (the equivalent of a Ph.D. exam in philosophy) and hence had to change his career plans. He worked as the head of a translation section for a major French publisher for many years, and he believes that this experience was invaluable training for his own writing career.

Although Michel Tournier is undoubtedly an important contemporary French novelist, he was almost unknown in French literary circles prior to the 1967 publication of his first novel, *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique (Friday).* For this work he was awarded the prestigious *Prix du roman* de l'Academie Francaise. Having once attracted the acclaim of literary critics and the general public, Tournier has never relinquished it.

The author's increasing renown is perhaps accounted for by several factors: his extraordinary handling of language, the strong philosophical and mythic components of his novels, the variety of topics which he explores and the amazing speed and quantity of his literary production. His prolific output is attested to by the fact that six of his fictional works appeared between 1970 and 1980: 1970, *Le Roi des Aulnes (The Ogre),* a unanimous choice for the Prix Goncourt; 1975, *Les Météores (Gemini);* 1977, his literary autobiography, *Le Vent Paraclet (The Wind of the Paraclete);* 1978, *Le Coq de Bruyère (The Wood Grouse),* a collection of short stories; *Des Clés et des Serrures (Keys and Locks),* a book on photography; 1980, *Gaspard, Melchior & Balthazar.*

The literary and philosophical influences which shape Tournier's work can be divided into three principal groups: fairy tales, philosophical or metaphysical essays, modern French and German fiction. Tournier has a particular affinity for fairy tales and philosophical essays because he believes that the multiplicity of interpretations which they not only allow but invite makes them the perfect vehicles for symbolic and metaphorical writing. As for modern French and German fiction, Tournier feels a particular debt to Paul Valéry, Jules Verne and Thomas Mann because of the profoundly philosophic aspect of their works. Interestingly, the Tournier novels have little in common with those of 20th-century French novelists, in particular with the *nouveaux romanciers* who are closest to him chronologically. Neither the political desperation and anguish which characterize Malraux's early fiction nor the guilt-obsessed dramas that are the earmark of Mauriac find the slightest echo in Tournier. Tournier's characters do, however, share the sense of alienation, separation and solitude which characterizes many of the protagonists of Gide and Camus. But the latters' protagonists remain at least marginally attached to their societies, whereas those of Tournier are obsessed with creation, which usually takes the form of an elaboration of a new metaphysical system. Tournier's originality lies in his masterful blending of mythical themes with the satire of the

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conte philosophique, the whimsy and gruesomeness of fairy tales, the multiplicity of meanings indigenous to the parable and the post-Nietzschean consciousness of solitude. His novels are philosophical meditations on the self and the other, and their content is invariably mythological in nature.

Since mythology and initiation form the warp and woof of Tournier's writing, the material which he weaves is checkered with offbeat typology: dwarfs, giants, ogres, twins, homosexuals, mentally and physically handicapped individuals. Moreover—as is often the case in mythological and initiatory accounts—air, wind, fire and earth are personified to the extent that they become actual characters in the novels. Part of the sinister quality of the writing comes from its involvement with the aberrant and the freakish. With this reversal of the "usual" viewpoint, the regular world is frequently depicted as crippled and deviant, deformed and anomolous.

Tournier's third novel, *Gemini,* which takes place primarily in France between 1930 and 1962, is his modern mythological interpretation of twinship and of meteorological phenomena. Since the novel is titled after Aristotle's *Meterologica,* it is not surprising that the motivating subject is that of *le temps*—weather and time—both of which were closely associated in Greek mythology. *Gemini's* protagonists, a set of twins with extraordinary powers, are reminiscent of mythological figures such as Castor and Pollux.

Tournier's heroes, Jean and Paul Surin, are remarkable by virtue of their twinship, which has endowed them with the ability to communicate with each other in their own language, to understand mentally handicapped individuals and eventually, in the case of Paul, to become assimilated with the meteorological workings of the universe. Tournier intimates that the twins are able to speak the secret language of creation and thus to revert to a period prior to the Fall when all things were implicitly understood in

unified harmony. That harmony is also inherent in Tournier's choice of twins as protagonists. By establishing an incestuous relationship between the brothers, Tournier attempts to create his version of one of the great myths—that of the perfect unified self—the androgynous entity. But the unit Jean-Paul, which Tournier endows with agelessness while they are together, splits like the zygote from which they originated, and one twin's search for his brother becomes the paradigm for all great searches for fulfillment. The quest of Paul for Jean is, of course, also a parabolic search for self. For Tournier, as for Faulkner, "doubling and incest are both images of the self-enclosed—the inability of the ego to break out of the circle of the self."*

This inability of Tournier's protagonists to break out of their respective selves is the reason for their separation from their communities at the beginning as well as at the end. Their only possibility for reintegration lies in their total transcendence of self. Not only do all of the doubles, or surrogate doubles, in Tournier's novels disintegrate, but the strain of selfhood is such that the heroes unanimously seek reabsorption in the universal *anima.* With these apotheoses, the protagonists attain the most valuable prize of mythology—immortality. Tournier juxtaposes the quest of the twins with that of their notorious homosexual uncle, Alexandre, who, upon the death of his father, takes over the family's vast trash-disposal empire, TURDCO. Alexandre, like the twins, is seeking transcendence but whereas the latters' is primarily celestial, the former's is exclusively carnal. The futility of Alexandre's search and its perverted aspect are implicit in the empire over which he reigns—that of the physically worn out, the decomposed, the dead.

In startling contrast to the scatological aspect of *Gemini,* Tournier makes use of Biblical quotations which are accompanied by prolonged speculation on the nature of the Trinity, in particular on that of the Paraclete. Moreover, by linking the four winds with the Holy Spirit, Tournier integrates Christian theology with pagan mythology in which the winds are deified. This association leads, in turn, to a metaphorical assimilation of all speech with the in-spired speech of the Pentecostal Paraclete.

Unfortunately, despite occasional flashes of brilliance, the scatological pollutes the ontological in *Gemini,* and the novel as a whole suffers. Moreover, from a structural point of view, the novel is weak: too many characters, locations, plots and subplots are not tightly enough integrated to form a cohesive whole. These weaknesses, coupled with a strong philosophical current which is never fully explained and an unpalatable hedonism, combine, unfortunately, to make the novel a *chef d'oeuvre manqué.* □

*John Irwin, *Doubling & Incest/Repitition & Revenge* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1975), p. 55.

"A whole world is implicated in the issues this book debates."
—*Chicago Tribune*

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Agitprop Banjo

David King Dunaway: *How Can I Keep From Singing: Pete Seeger;* McGraw-Hill; New York.

Frances Davis: *A Fearful Innocence;* Kent State University Press; Kent, Ohio.

by Gary S. Vasilash

When I think about folk music, I can remember myself at about age nine, wondering if the guy was ever going to get the correct change to get off the train in Boston in the Kingston Trio song, wondering why the performers on *Hootenanny* were allowed to appear less sartorially resplendent than those who sang along with Mitch. Upon receipt of David King Dunaway's biography of Pete Seeger, *How Can I Keep From Singing,* I thought I would learn something about a music of which I know little. After all, the news release accompanying the book calls Seeger "Mr. Banjo," and, sure enough, Seeger's signature, which appears periodically throughout the pages, shows that he even pens a little banjo directly following the letter *r.* A discography is included that lists nearly 220 recordings that feature Seeger, and it indicates that he played with such notables as Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee, Josh White and Burl Ives. I was sure that I would learn about folk music.

I should have been keyed in right away after I examined the illustrations. The second is a picture of Seeger in 1954, taken not at a folk festival, but when he appeared before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Music is not the bedrock of this biography; rather chintzy leftism is at its center, permeating the pages, as in any other strident tract.

Consider a man who is responsible for some of those posters one sees on occasion in texts on the Soviet Union, posters showing brawny men and ample women turning parts on lathes or happily flinging wheat over their shoulders into the cornucopia of state agriculture. Pithy captions on the posters are to serve as inspiration for attaining the goal of higher productivity. Consider Jane Fonda's *Coming Home* and *The China Syndrome* or Warren Beatty's *Reds.* Is the poster illustrator an artist or a mere tool of the Party? Were any of those films made primarily for entertainment, or was the purpose to enlighten the masses about the criminality of the war in Vietnam, the horrors of nuclear power, the insane drive for profits at any cost, and the sexiness of Bolshevism? While explicators of a Marxist bent see ideological statements in all forms of art as the art's glory, I like to think that in some cases a given work exists simply as a pleasing or thought-provoking object in itself. One who strums a banjo and sings tunes like "The Blue Tail Fly" and "Kisses Sweeter Than Wine" is undoubtedly a folk singer. Seeger did that. But it seems that what Seeger sang most often were the beatitudes of the American Communist Party—which makes him less of a folk singer and more of a "people's" troubadour. And in the parlance of Seeger and his ilk, the noun *people* has an ominous meaning. It stands for the communist henchmen who subjugate a society in the name of its common folk. Only their lackeys and trained murderers are *people,* everybody else is not. In today's Poland, 98 percent of the society is not people—the two percent who oppress them, with the assistance of the imperial Red Army, are people.

Before examining the life of the man who broke down in tears at his warm, complete with hugs and flowers, reception in Hanoi during the war in Vietnam, the man who could bring himself to criticize only a small number of polluted lakes and the weather of the Soviet Union after a trip there, it's worthwhile to note the point of view of the author of what is reportedly the first full-scale biography of Seeger to be written with the cooperation of the subject. The first thing that struck me is that the terms "right-wing" and "conservative" are used interchangeably, and both designate people who are cretinous yahoos. A typical observation from Dunaway: "in the name of patriotism, conservatives would attack Seeger in every way short of assassination." Dunaway says this of Seeger in the late 50's: "When he arrived at a hotel, he had to check closets, for fear of a right-wing frame-up." Was Seeger ever deprived of the freedom to sing whatever he wished, locked up in a psychiatric hospital, sent to a concentration camp, evicted from work and home by the government? Author Dunaway is unable to come up with any evidence of such hostile maltreatment. And even when Seeger was convicted on ten counts of contempt of Congress in 1961, he spent only

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a few hours behind bars and was acquitted the following year by the Court of Appeals. Yet the sympathetic reader is meant to feel that anything of the direst sort could easily happen to Seeger. In Dunaway's socialist "realistic" rendition, Seeger is the Hero as Victim. Some victim, as his earthly riches and successes demonstrate.

It would be fitting if our Hero as Victim was a product of the school of hard knocks and dirty socks, but that isn't the case. Seeger's father was a professor of music at the University of California at Berkeley before son Peter's birth in 1919. The elder Seeger had what Dunaway calls "a political conversion" on a brief tour of the San Joaquin Valley. Charles Seeger saw migrant workers and, faster than you can say IWW, he was firmly in the arms of the left. His wife Constance wasn't far behind. Dunaway says she called herself a socialist. Her conversion is symptomatic of the types we're dealing with: "she liked Norman Thomas because he drove an old, cheap car." Since Charles Seeger the radical wasn't as popular on campus as he was before being imbued with the inner light, he felt he had to get away. To do so, he bought a "gleaming, black Model T Ford." Eventually, Charles and Constance split up.

Pete's education began in the 30's. His father took him to his first May Day parade in 1932, and he's been walking in such parades in one form or another ever since. As a junior high school student, Pete Seeger loved books about woodland adventures. One day he chanced upon *New Russia's Primer,* "a Bolshevik children's book," and it seems that his whole life then fell into place. There would be a forest-covered brave new world, and he'd be there, playing "rural, working-class music" on a banjo—once he learned how.

Learning how wasn't really at the top of his list. Seeger attended Harvard and Dunaway makes a flattering comparison with another Harvard alum, John Reed. Seeger was initially a member of the Banjo Club, but he dropped out to join the Young Communist League. The biography nearly dropped from my hands when I read, "The YCL represented a good-natured extremism, advertising themselves with appeals to sports and clean fun." This act of Seeger's is key. At the time he was a neophyte banjo player. If being a musician was the most important thing in his life, it would seem that he would have stuck to playing banjo with his peers rather than having good, clean fun between sessions with Lenin's *Imperialism.* But Seeger planned to become a journalist, undoubtedly to further the aims of the YCL. Our hero's plan failed. Listen to Dunaway's breathless and bitter description of Seeger's attempts to get a job as a reporter: "he would call a paper in the morning, take a subway to the editor's office that afternoon, and find there was no job for him—all in the same day." Some persecution.

College life, no luck at finding a job: nothing worked out for Seeger. But there was one constant, one thing that didn't let him down: the Communist Party. The importance of the Party to his thinking is indicated by his reaction to the Hitler-Stalin Pact. When Seeger heard about it, he was touring in the hinterlands. Says Dunaway, "He had a hard time believing his ears. There was no *Daily Worker* for guidance." That shrewd reaction helps explain his successful rise from the YCL into the ranks of the CP. After Hitler reneged, the Party and Seeger backed the war effort. But this hero wasn't bred actually to fight, so he used "his father's Washington contacts" to get himself assigned to a division wherein he could play his banjo. While other soldiers were dying, Seeger was cutting records on the side. When the war was over, Seeger started a song-publishing company named People's Songs. Once again he became confused: he didn't know whether to be a musician or to follow "his duty to political discipline." His solution? "To resolve his confusion, Seeger again turned to the Communist Party." Nothing like a little freethinking by one who is hailed by Dunaway as a true son of liberty.

In the Mail

In a Pig's Eye **by Piggiani; Epimetheus Press; New York.** An offensive and disgusting novel, but funny at times, filled with well-aimed shots at liberal idiocies.

The Lives of the Greek Poets **by Mary R. Lefkowitz; The Johns Hopkins University Press; Baltimore.** An analysis of the reliability of existing biographies of several ancient Greek poets, including Homer, Sophocles and Euripides.

The Stories and Parables of Si-Tien **by Adam Podgorecki; Carleton University; Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.** A collection of brief stories by the Chinese writer, Si-Tien.

The Status of the Humanities **by John Arthos; Philosophical Library; New York.** A commentary on the current practices in the study of the humanities and the intrinsic value of such studies.

The Achievement of William Styron **(revised edition) edited by Robert K. Morris with Irving Malin; University of Georgia Press; Athens, Georgia.** An analysis of Styron as a contemporary Southern writer and an examination of each of his books.

Between the Hammer and the Anvil **by Stefan Korbonski; Hippocrene Books; New York.** A collection of short stories based on the author's experiences as head of the underground resistance movement in Poland during the nazi occupation.

The Polish Underground State: A Guide to the Underground, 1939-1945 **by Stefan Korbonski; Hippocrene Books; New York.** A detailed history of the Polish underground organization, including footnotes and indices, by the current chairman of the Assembly of Captive Nations and holder of the Yad Vashem Medal of the Righteous conferred by the Israeli government.

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Basically, this pattern of slavishness to the CP continued. The CP formed a club, so he joined. He wanted to make his song-publishing outfit succeed, so he listened to what the Party had to suggest. (He should have listened to a capitalist, instead: People's Songs went bankrupt in '49.) The Party supported Henry Wallace for President in '48, so Seeger strummed and sang like mad on his behalf. In 1950, when Congressional heat was being put on domestic communists, Seeger left the Party—but Dunaway assures us that the act was motivated "more from an instinct for self-preservation than any political differences." Seeger was in another blue funk the following year because his musical group, the Weavers, was losing bookings because of his listing in *Red Channels*. Hero as Victim once again. How did he come to grips with this sad state of affairs? Dunaway notes, "Fortunately for his psyche, Pete received word that the Party supported the Weavers." The group didn't last. However, Dunaway cites another tribute that undoubtedly warmed the synapses of Seeger's Party-prescribed brain: the Rosenbergs asked to hear a Weavers' tune on their way to the electric chair.

If there was ever a dupe to the CP, Mr. Banjo has to be it. The presentation in this biography is supposed to put a halo around Seeger's head, and I'm sure many readers see the glow: otherwise, they probably wouldn't make it through the introduction. In some cultures, lunatics are held sacred. Applying that, then this book qualifies as hagiography: Seeger is certainly on the fringe, or at least he suffers from arrested mental development. Even overlooking the fact that he was cut adrift from intellectual moorings when there was no Party guidance, Seeger did—and undoubtedly continues to do—some things that are characteristic not of a mature adult but of a spoiled, petulant child. For example, he became a popular success, which meant a substantial income. But he didn't want to know about that income. His wife had to put a blank sheet of paper over his income tax form so he could sign it without seeing how wealthy he was. He made numerous recordings and urged his fans not to buy his records. He begged to be put on TV. He ached to be on *Hootenanny*, but ABC resisted, saying that Seeger wasn't right for the medium: Seeger's fans called for a boycott of the show and picketed the studio. (Remember the liberals' ire when the other side called for a boycott of programs it considered bordering on the immoral?) After much whining, he got a chance to be on *Today*. Seeger told the show's producers that he was going to perform a song called "Garbage." Asked for other options, he said that it was either the antinuke, antifinancier song or "Walking Down Death Row" or "If a Revolution Comes to My Country." He got his way. This is the oppressive society and system which he devoted his life to destroying.

For over 300 pages the reader is supposed to pity and admire this man. Pity him for all of the abuse he has received from the right and the government, admire him because he was always loyal to the Party: "He did not criticize the Party" writes Dunaway, an honest biographer. "An anti-Communist bard like Burl Ives could have a Hollywood career, but Pete would not break ranks." Still, the strength of his conviction was somewhat wanting: as we know from Dunaway, during the 50's Seeger didn't acknowledge his Party relationship because he was afraid of the consequences.

The following comment from Seeger is illuminating: "'If rulers really knew how important songs can be,' Pete Seeger once said, looking back on his life, 'they would probably have done something to Woody Guthrie and me and other people long ago.'" All along, he has obviously wanted an America in which *people* do something to other people when they dislike the latters' singing. An America of Gulags.

Another paean to the radicalism of noxious dolts is *A Fearful Innocence* by Frances Davis. It is basically the autobiography of Davis and a history of her environment, primarily a sixty-acre plot of land in Massachusetts known as "the Farm." What makes this place notable is that in the years after the turn of the century the Farm was the weekend haven for students from M.I.T. and for others who shared a radical outlook. The idyllic setting for the likes of young Walter Lippmann, Samuel Eliot, Jr., Lawrence Langner and Lincoln Steffens was, of course, a utopian community founded by Ralph ("Rory") Albertson, a Congregational minister who planned to help reform the world ("win the victory for the wretched of the earth," Davis says), and his wife Hazel, who had a penchant for wearing white bloomers. The Farm functioned about as well as could be expected, operated as it was by a bunch of social reformers who pretended (on weekends, generally) that they were farmers and who preferred talking to shoveling manure. This gang was presided over by the earth mother in white who seemed to be in a constant Whitmanesque reverie. The farmer, Rory, wasn't much of a hand when it came to [illegible] nominally a man of [illegible] nature a man of the skin. [illegible] the arms of a "Madame X" in Boston, the Farm behind him. It hadn't been his first attempt at creating a utopian society (nor had it been his first fling). The whole story of the Farm is pathetic and ridiculous. These people who were going to save the world couldn't even cultivate their own garden. For that matter, they had serious problems seeding the earth. If some pragmatists hadn't periodically arrived (none of whom wore white bloomers or went to M.I.T.) and operated the Farm as a farm, those who lived there full time would have gotten more than a little thin living on the paucity of their grand ideals.

Davis's own story adds a touch of melodrama. She decided to become a journalist, apparently to let the world know what was *really* going on. While that smacks of Pete Seeger, at least it can be said that she achieved her goal. Had

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Seeger done so, however, I suspect that the stories would be close parallels. That is, given their backgrounds and the time that they came of age (during the mid-to-late 30's), they would have undoubtedly gone the same route and cultivated the same people, assuming more ambition and less willingness to become a lackey on Seeger's part. As for Davis, she worked as an advertising copywriter by day, while by night she learned the news business from a man named J.W. Terry. Terry wrote and laid out a news sheet for a League of Nations lobby. She found him as a result of having checked all the names in the phone book that began with "Peace" or "League." Davis came up with that approach because, she explains, "I had heard enough about 'Peace' at the Farm and on Polly's [her mother's] hill: Wilson's Peace, the Protocols of Peace, Permanent Peace, the Fourteen Points of Peace that Walter Lippmann had helped Wilson's Colonel House to formulate, the League as Instrument of Peace." Having imbibed the frothy brew offered by Terry, our plucky heroine went to cover a war: the Spanish Civil War. She becomes a regular Nancy Drew of the press corps, an intrepid young soul who was able to get stories over the lines, where mortal men feared to tread. In the battle between the profascist "Patriots" and the proleft "Loyalists," it isn't hard to predict Davis's sympathies. As if a page had been taken from the Seeger biography, the patriotic generals and their supporters are portrayed as a bunch of brutal boobs. It seems as if the Patriots are the only ones taking part in any violence, or at least they're the ones who are always responsible for dropping bombs and such. And this is practically everything that can be said of Ms. Davis's effort on behalf of the Kent State University Press.

Bare, Ruined Landscapes

Wright Morris: *Will's Boy: A Memoir;* Harper & Row; New York.

by Diane Long Hoeveler

> I began to invent the Midwest out of my experience, then I began to elaborate on it,
> The slowness of time, the quality of life,
> The Protestant background.
> Wright Morris

In reading Wright Morris's autobiography one experiences simultaneously both the landscape of Midwestern America and the "inscape" of Morris himself as a child and adolescent. His phrase, "the slowness of time," might well describe those particular characteristics of style that his critics either praise or damn. There is little action, many fragmented moments of time, an ambivalent tone, numerous repetitions from previously published works, and an emphasis on relationships between characters. Although Morris is not a realist like Hamlin Garland or Sherwood Anderson, he captures the texture, both external and internal, of life in the Midwest from 1910 to 1930. In writing of "the quality of life" Morris evokes the dominant themes that run through his more than twenty literary works, the deep and universal concerns that characterize his vision: the dichotomy of past and present, the contrast between rural and urban experiences and the relationship of the son to the father. His phrase, "the Protestant background," makes one aware of the ways that both his style and his themes are influenced by that particular brand of Midwestern Protestantism that Morris imbibed from his environment.

Critics have traditionally compared Morris stylistically to Joyce, Woolf, Henry James and Faulkner. But my reading of this memoir compels me to suggest that Morris's style springs most directly from his Protestant heritage. His mother's family was devoutly Seventh-Day Adventist, and, although Morris rejected this belief, a residual Protestant streak has influenced not only his writing style, but also his vision of the world. He was, by his own description, a paragon of the Christian adolescent (except for a brief stint in a Nebraska reform school for theft). Morris worked as a prayer leader for a Chicago YMCA when he was a teen-ager, and he confesses to being surprised at his ability to stand up, without any coaching, and pray spontaneously and eloquently. At eighteen he briefly attended a Seventh-Day Adventist college. Both of these encounters with evangelical Christianity seem to have been attempts to locate a center of order and stability in his life, which was one of chaos and uncertainty with his father.

There is a sense in Morris that the barrenness of the land in Nebraska, as well as the Texas farm on which he worked, led to introspection, a movement away from externals to the internal world of the self, with its creativity, vitality and strength. In his attempts to escape the atrophied and morally dead life of so many half-alive acquaintances, Morris turned not to a flurry of activity, but to the resources within himself. Because of this emphasis on the internal, Morris has been labeled a Kierkegaardian, an existentialist and a nihilist. But it is more accurate to see Morris as the product of a Protestantism that believes we must turn inward to redeem our buried lives. The legacy of Protestantism appears in Morris's prose style as well, for he writes in the manner of a New England sermon—terse, ascetic, unembellished except by the vision within.

The regional descriptions in the memoir (whether they be of Nebraska farm towns, the cities of Omaha, Chicago and Los Angeles, or the Texas panhandle) are always secondary to descriptions of the characters who were much more instrumental in shaping Morris's psyche. Bouncing from apartment to rented

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house, mother to mother, town to city, Morris managed to maintain what he calls "abundant optimism" in his own future. In his raising of himself, in his creation of himself as an artist, he produced his greatest achievement. In overcoming the rupture in his life between the past and the present, he recovers (like a good Protestant) that original vision of unfallen man living in harmony with nature. Yet there is also an acceptance of the Fall, an awareness that man is corrupt and limited and that salvation is uncertain and individual. □

Words that Would Not Come

Nadine Gordimer: *July's People;* The Viking Press; New York.

by Fred G. Wacker, III

Nadine Gordimer's latest novel is a significant departure from her earlier literary achievements. Quite different from her complex treatment of attitudes toward apartheid which she filtered through the biased visions of *The Conservationist,* or such intricate psychological analyses as she conducted in *A Soldier's Embrace* or in *Burgher's Daughter,* in *July's People* Gordimer has developed something which can be termed a new simplicity. The novel will no doubt occupy an important place in the author's now-sizable portfolio as an example of her more mature style.

By saying new simplicity, I do not mean that Gordimer has moved away from her characteristic examination of modern human beings in a complicated modern world; rather, like Michelangelo's partial revelations of form in the struggling "Slaves," Gordimer chooses to show us only sketchy fragments of character and action. The reader must chip away the remaining unworked stone in order to find the answers to the difficult questions that Gordimer poses.

July's People takes place deep in the South African bush in 1980. It is the story of a white family, the Smaleses, forced to flee from their predominantly Caucasian, well-to-do urban environment, which has been recently decimated by black revolution. The Smaleses are taken in by their long-time house servant, July, who shelters them in his native jungle settlement, far from the dangers of the increasingly frequent urban riots. Gordimer heightens our discomfort with this situation by setting the story in the present. Not only are we deprived of that subtle alleviation of tension and uneasiness which the distance of time can provide, but also our perspective on these quite-proximate events is further limited by Gordimer's persistent suggestions that the past has no meaning at all to the Smaleses in their new, primitive surroundings.

Each individual in the Smales family attempts to apply things of the past to the strange jungle lifestyle, but all such attempts are in vain. The children do not adjust at first, and the parents are able to see these problems of adjustment in their children but not in themselves. Bam Smales seems to be more concerned with receiving muddled information over his radio about the revolution rather than actively seeking for ways to protect his family. Maureen, his wife, is a prime example of a character with severely limited perspective. Although she takes inventory of such minor things brought along in the hasty escape as "a gadget for taking the dry cleaner's tags off clothes without breaking your nails," she seems unaware of the irony of her present plight:

> There was no nail-file; often she sat examining her broken nails, taking the rind of dirt from under them . . . with a piece of fine wire, a thorn, whatever presented itself in the dust around her.

She worries about contracting malaria (she even supplies herself and her husband with preventive pills), but the Smales's sordid living conditions demonstrate Maureen's conspicuous lack of attention to the hygiene of both herself and her children. Maureen can "name the variety of thorn trees—dichrostachys cinerea, sekelbos" that she sees at the river's edge, but it does not occur to her that her refined botanical knowledge is essentially useless in the savage bush.

What is one to make of such seemingly minor details? It is precisely these bits of scattered information which cumulatively form our conceptions of Ms. Gordimer's characters. She relies on this fragmented presentation of details in order to prevent the Smaleses from becoming too human in an environment which denies their very humanity. The white people July welcomes into this world undergo a visible process of dehumanization—Gordimer seems dedicated to making this fact absolutely clear. When Maureen announces to her husband that she "caught Royce wiping . . . with a stone" it is apparent that the children's habits are quickly becoming more primitive. And the children's father gradually is more and more victimized by this unfamiliar, unpleasant lifestyle; any formally ordered daily activities he once enjoyed are now reduced to "days . . . roughly divided into categories of work and rest," but in truth the opportunities for Bam actually to work are minimal. In July's world, he finds himself ever more dependent on the man who used to work for him: whenever a question arises, the answer seems to be, "ask July." The consistent ebb of his authority takes its toll on Bam's conscience and character: "he lay down . . . and at once suddenly rolled over onto his face, as the father had never done before his sons" in a poignant act of self-effacement. Even Maureen is forced to acknowledge the changed social position that results from their new status as refugees.

> 'Anyway, I don't want the other

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> women to find food for my family. I must do it myself.'—But here they both knew the illusion of that statement . . . she and her family were fed by them, succoured by them, hidden by them. She looked at her servant: they were their creatures, like their cattle and pigs.

Every character in *July's People* is created with this technique of scattering fragmented information throughout the text. Moving away from the dense psychological examination of character that she employed in her earlier writing, Gordimer seems at last to have expressed what Hardy called the "ache of modernism." Her method of presenting fragmented detail is appropriate for a novel in which people search for order in a universe of disorder. The Smales's automobile "would rust and be stripped to hulk unless it made the journey back, soon"; Ms. Gordimer likens it to a lost "ship that had docked in a far country." Maureen becomes aware of a similar lack of direction in her new life, not knowing "where she was, in time, in the order of a day as she had always known it." (Near the end of the novel we find that her watch is broken—Gordimer wants to be sure we do not miss the point.) Maureen suffers the typical plight of many protagonists of 20th-century fiction, feeling that "shock, that drop beneath the feet, [which] happens to the self alone." Finally, when Gordimer tells us that Maureen "was not in possession of any part of her life . . . the background had fallen away . . . she had gained no established point of a continuing present from which to recognize her own sequence," the author lays to rest any doubts we may yet have as to high modernism's influence on her writing. W.B. Yeats's cry in "The Second Coming" is, without question, the prototype for Gordimer's passage:

> Turning and turning in the widening gyre
> The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
> Things fall apart; the center cannot hold . . .

In *The Broken Center,* his critical study of the relationship of theology to modern literature, Nathan Scott has stated that many modern artists have been faced with the problem of steering "lonely, separate courses through the spiritual void of our time." According to Scott, the modern artist has deeply needed "systems of value . . . in which his art will find a principle of order and unity." Reading Gordimer in the light of this statement, I must conclude that *July's People* is a difficult novel—not so much because of its disjointed narrative style and dislocated time sequence, but because of the ultimate absence of any such "systems of value" or "principle of order." To be sure, the modern novelist's world is one in which "the center cannot hold"; Gordimer is right when she likens the white family's insignificant existence to a "pocket torch held under the blanket of the universe" and, elsewhere, is perfectly correct in endowing the static which the family hears over the radio with symbolic portent—"a cosmic sigh; they heard the sough of time and space, the wave poised over everything." But Ms. Gordimer gives the reader no answers; we are left hanging at the end of a slender thread. Furthermore, if we recall at this point an earlier key passage, the novel's end, as well as its ultimate message, stand out in bold relief as unresolved issues.

> He struggled hopelessly for words that were not phrases from back there, words that would make the truth that must be forming here, out of the blacks, out of themselves . . . But the words would not come . . . The words were not there; his mind, his anger, had no grip.

Bam Smales's inner turmoil here is strikingly similar to Gordimer's choosing not to tell us anything conclusive. Indeed, perhaps such a choice was never really available to her; perhaps she felt that in the final moments of *July's People* we are all helpless spectators, left only with the inability to act in July's environment. The language with which Bam Smales is so unable to express himself is the same language that Gordimer uses to tell her distressing story; we see that for both people "their words sank into the broken clay walls like spilt blood . . . buried here." Nadine Gordimer is certainly gifted with the capability to express dramatically the imbalance in South African black-white relations; the bulk of her work to date attests to this. However, *July's People* demonstrates that any sort of decision on the author's part to resolve this serious conflict within her fictional world has yet to be explored.

Comments by Ronald Reagan, Edwin J. Feulner, William F. Buckley, Jr., Jacques Barzun, Milton Friedman, Russell Kirk, Willard C. Butcher, Philip M. Crane, Tom Wolfe and more . . .

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Dubious Inferences from Shaky Premises

James Fallows: *National Defense;* Random House; New York.

by Samuel T. Francis

Aristotle held that a rhetorician must base his arguments on the preconceptions of his audience. James Fallows's arguments against reliance on sophisticated and expensive military technology appear to follow this precept. So certain is Fallows that the majority of his readers share his mistrust of the military, contempt for bureaucracy and hostility to the defense industry that he is able to build on these preconceptions without ever fully substantiating them. Needless to say, he is fond of exposing the contradiction of conservatives who criticize welfare expenditures as wasteful and fraudulent but who fail to criticize the Defense Department for the same vice. There is, of course, no contradiction: conservatives believe that public spending for national security is legitimate and necessary but that such spending is both illegitimate and unnecessary (indeed, harmful) for social engineering. To be sure, Fallows does recount many instances of wasteful defense spending on weapons and systems that have not worked well. In some cases he is correct, and in other cases wrong. In the former category much of what he is correct about was known previously (since Fallows has no professional military experience and has never been a defense expert or a DOD employee, almost everything in his book is second-hand). In the latter category Fallows appears to follow much of the hard-left line on strategic weapons and concepts.

Fallows's ostensible position is that of an educated layman who is honestly seeking a concrete resolution to the highly ideological and politicized debate on national defense expenditures and policies. This approach might be helpful if his concept of national defense were clear. Since at no point in the book is there any discussion of likely or possible enemies of the United States and no attention to Soviet foreign-policy aims or military capacities to carry them out, it is impossible to evaluate his criticisms of defense policy, even if we assume them to be factually correct.

Fallows argues that a "culture of procurement," by which the military professionals and their industrial sugar daddies concertedly seek to escalate the costs and profits of defense, has replaced the honest attempt to provide effective weapons, policies and institutions. There is much truth to this charge, and everyone knows it. It is inherent in the very nature of bureaucracies, whether military or not, to serve their own interests and to behave according to established routine. The operation of this law of bureaucracy in the American defense establishment has been intensified by the fact that not since World War II has defense policy been guided by men with high-level combat experience. In lieu of such experience it is logical to expect that defense policy-making would become an armchair profession for technicians, engineers and management experts. In a somewhat Swiftian mood one might argue that the obvious solution to this problem would be for the United States to go to war and at once acquire the combat experience needed to correct the airy cerebrations of the eggheads. As undesirable as this solution may sound, it may in fact be the only one that is practical. Fallows suggests that we simply hunker down, cerebrate some more about the realities of combat (about which he knows nothing) and its lessons for policy, and undertake reform. Yet, given his grim portrait of the self-serving bureaucrats who dominate defense-policy decisions and legislation, is reform a realistic approach? Does he or anyone else believe that it is politically possible to forbid ex-generals to take jobs with defense contractors? Would not the same entrenched elements that prevent reform and effective management elsewhere in the Pentagon and industrial establishments subvert or circumscribe this measure, which directly threatens their interests, as well? Fallows does not consider how this reform might affect the quality of military leadership, nor does he discuss what material incentives might persuade officers to enter or to stay in the military with such a prohibition.

> "I wish everyone who knows the alphabet would read James Fallows's 'National Defense' . . . It isn't necessarily that Mr. Fallows is correct in what he says (though I happen to think that he is); it's just that he has pitched an emotional subject on such an unusually commonsensical level."
>
> —*New York Times*

Despite the core of truth in his portrait of the "culture of procurement" and the tendency of politicians to debate defense on the grounds of "more vs. less" instead of "better vs. worse," Fallows, because of his lack of military professionalism, commits egregious blunders. He sneers at the Army for insisting that certain weapons developed in the 1960's be able to endure both Arctic and Saharan conditions, despite the fact that they were used primarily in Vietnam. The point is that the United States has troops and commitments all over the world, and the weapons it develops must be adaptable to combat conditions in different climates. To develop a weapon that functions efficiently in a tropical environment but not in an Arctic one would expose the U.S. armed forces to a serious vulnerability. If the Chinese had launched an invasion of South Korea, or

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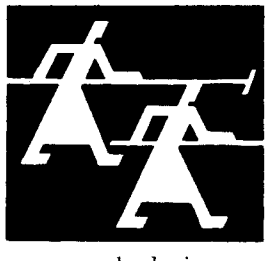
if a crisis in the Middle East had required U.S. intervention in the 1960's, the standard-issue combat rifle for American troops would have to have performed properly in these climates as well as in Vietnam.

Fallows castigates several Senators, both of the left and of the right, for their 1980 debate on chemical warfare. Both sides talked only about the horrors of or the need for nerve gas. Neither, says Fallows, discussed the only sensible solution: a nonlethal knockout gas coupled with antigas suits for troops. Once more, the essential point can be grasped by anyone conversant with military reality: if the Soviets were to use lethal gas, our use of a nonlethal gas against them would be inadequate. Only our capacity to use lethal gas against them would be an adequate deterrent to their initiation of its use against us. Fallows's tour through defense policy, then, is somewhat like that of the stereotypical American tourist through the museums and palaces of old Europe. He has a good time and he learns something; but to those who are familiar with the subject, he is an object of ridicule.

Fallows is on much firmer ground on the relatively nontechnical aspects of defense, especially in his critique of the volunteer army and of what he calls the "managerial view" of the military, an approach that applies the methods of General Motors to the armed forces. Fallows argues that the replacement of traditional military styles by managerialism ignores the realities of war and the necessarily heirarchical, authoritarian nature of military organization. The managerial revolution in the military has led to inappropriate education for military officers, errors in training and recruitment, careerism and the erosion of the martial spirit. Fallows's discussion of the resulting problems is by far his best chapter, but he fails to appreciate that this revolution has been promoted by the same liberalizing influences that he elsewhere defends. It was, after all, not George S. Patton or Douglas MacArthur who promoted the managerial approach to war, but Robert MacNamara and his entourage of technocrats. The motives of this approach were partly a desire for more efficiency and partly a libertarian and egalitarian hostility to the discipline and deference that alone make military life and war possible and bearable.

Fallows fails to understand that the restoration of traditional military styles would necessarily involve the justificaton of some very antiliberal values and, indeed, a certain glorification of war itself —the comradeship, the heroism, the sense of victory and what Patton himself called "the cataclysmic ecstasy of conflict." To be sure, to defend these things in the military does not mean they should be defended or applied outside it, but if civilians are to think well of traditional military values, there must be a good deal more appreciation of authority, discipline, hierarchy and self-sacrifice than now exists.

Certain conceptual lacunae exist in Fallows's book, the result of his ambiguous adherence to liberal ideology. The principal gap is his inability to make a firm connection between the technical needs of defense and the social and moral fabric of the society defended. Fallows is only vaguely aware of this connection, and what wisdom the book contains arises from his occasional awareness. A more profound understanding might have enabled him to see the range of technical and budgetary problems he identifies as reflective of the failure of



contemporary orthodoxies to recognize the nature of social reality. The ideology of management, the denigration of self-sacrifice, the universalization of economic and rationalistic models in all spheres of life—these are hardly peculiar to the American military establishment. They pervade contemporary America, and they are drawn from and justified by contemporary liberal doctrine. The real fault of American conservatives in the debate over national defense is not that they are hypocrites blind to wastefulness but that they do not generally perceive the cultural roots of many contemporary failures in defense and military policies. The dominant ideology among conservatives in America today is a naive faith in economic solutions: more development will thwart revolution in the Third World; a freer market and economic progress will resolve racial tensions in America; more spending will lead to a stronger defense; economic sanctions will be effective against communist and terrorist aggressors. There is little qualitative difference between these ideas on the right and corresponding ones on the left—except that the right generally prefers business as an instrument of progress, and the left turns to government.

Fallows's book, then, is not significant for the novelty of its ideas and conclusions but rather for its primary conceptual fault. It betrays an ambiguity in the contemporary liberal mind, which stumblingly perceives its own inadequacies but as yet has failed to come to grips with the source of these shortcomings. Fallows recognizes the value of authority and the need for a better motivation than enlightened self-interest, and this very recognition should lead him to a view of man and society similar to that of modern conservatism. That this tension between perception and ideology exists in the liberal mind today (Fallows is not alone in his ambivalence) is cause for hope that it may lead to a larger and truer view of society on the left (in which case it will become right). The fact that many conservatives are now congratulating themselves on their political victories, their well-funded organizations, their access to high-level officials and their essentially materialist ideology of economic salvation is a disappointment, an ominous sign of their failure to understand their original mission. □

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Water in the Sand

Raymond Carver: *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

John Gardner: *The Art of Living and Other Stories;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

Amos Oz: *Where the Jackals Howl and Other Stories;* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; New York.

by Robert C. Steensma

The short story is a relatively new genre, but in the last century the more formulaic short fiction of the mid-19th century has evolved into a freer form that at times bears little resemblance to its forerunners. Edgar Allan Poe, reviewing Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* in 1842, believed that the tale (he didn't use the term *short story*) should achieve a "certain unique or single effect" through "one pre-conceived design." For Poe everything—plot, character, language—must be carefully selected and integrated. As perhaps the first theoretician of the short story, Poe of course failed to anticipate its complex potential and his insistence upon the single effect did much to encourage the rise of the commercial short story so dear to American magazine publishers.

The work of Gogol, Turgenev, Chekhov, Flaubert, Maupassant, James, Crane and London over the next 75 years moved the short story closer to the "slice of life" advocated by realists and naturalists. These writers, and James in particular, insisted that the author must portray life directly and intensely. James might well have echoed Chekhov's assertion that "The aim of fiction is absolute and honest truth," while at the same time recognizing something of the potential in Maupassant's observation that "Our eyes, our ears, our sense of smell, of taste, differing from one person to another, create as many truths as there are men upon the earth." As the genre developed, most of the great talents were drawn to it at one time or another, each creating characters and themes "so strangely, fascinatingly particular, and yet so recognizably general," as James remarked of Turgenev's work. Because of its wide appeal in its various forms to different audiences, the short story maintains its vitality while the novel often sinks into sensationalism, banality or obscurity. The short story is also flexible, readily adaptable to different approaches in plot, characterization, theme and symbolism. Writers have successfully employed it in the gothic, romantic, realistic, naturalistic and impressionistic modes. Something of this flexibility can be seen in the new collections of John Gardner, Raymond Carver and Amos Oz.

Dr. Steensma is professor of English at the University of Utah.

"Carver not only enchants, he convinces."

—Time

Of the three Gardner is certainly the most widely known, having published six novels, two volumes of short stories, an epic poem, a biography of Chaucer, several collections of fairy tales and juvenile stories, and four scholarly books on fiction and medieval literature—all since 1970. His newest, *The Art of Living,* is a collection of ten stories, several of which were previously published in prestigious magazines. Each is the kind of story that appeals to the sophisticated audience by providing something for everyone—a dash of local color, a touch of symbolism, a few delicate ambiguities, a taste of childhood innocence.

Gardner is at his best when he deals with basic issues—love, death, elemental human relationships—and avoids the heavy symbolism which sometimes creeps into his work. Among the stories in this group, the best are those concerned with recognizable human beings and problems; Gardner examines them with insight and sensitivity but without the strata of psychiatric claptrap that burden so much modern fiction. "Redemption" explores the reactions of a family to the death of a son in a farm accident. "Nimram" is the story of a famous and sophisticated symphony conductor who learns something about himself and the world from a terminally ill young girl who sits beside him on a Los Angeles-Chicago flight; his own facile view of life is strangely altered by the girl's physical fragility and her timidly expressed religion. In "Come on Back," set in rural New York, Gardner evokes childhood as seen by the narrator nearly half a century later; the family stories, the Welsh songfest, the wake after the suicide of an uncle are all photographed in the soft focus of remembered experience gently tinted by nostalgia and love. But when Gardner ventures into the symbolic or the comic, he doesn't do as well. "The Joy of the Just," intended perhaps to satirize a certain kind of *unco guid* religiosity, fails to come off; in "Vlemk the Box-Painter" (which runs to about one-third of the entire volume), "The Music Lover" and "The Art of Living," Gardner loses his reader in the thickets of modish symbolism and pretentious philosophical discussions.

What We Talk About When We Talk About Love is Raymond Carver's third book in five years. These seventeen stories, most of them published earlier in quarterlies, might well be viewed as disinterments of the buried life, a series of dreary insights into the lives of a bunch of losers, some of them pointless, most of them dealing with routine, joyless sexual infidelities. Carver's characters drift without any sense of past, present or future. Whatever emotions they show are as contrived and unconvincing as one

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character's statement when she recalls her husband's romp with a chambermaid: "My heart is broken. It's turned to a piece of stone. I'm no good. That's what's as bad as anything, that I'm no good anymore." And that's precisely the trouble with most of Carver's people: they're no good anymore, and they probably never were. The banality of their talk is symptomatic of their sterile lives. In a few stories, however, Carver tells some intriguing tales. "Everything Sticks to Him," in which a father tells his grown daughter about a marital quarrel, successfully gives a comic twist to an incident seen from the softening perspective of twenty years. In "The Calm" a boy witnesses a barbershop squabble which introduces him to the adult world. And in "The Bath" the telephone voice at the end of the story creates a haunting ambiguity about the fate of a small boy seriously hurt in an accident. Unfortunately, most of Carver's characters provide us with only Archie and Edith Bunkers trying to play Hamlet, and, as in "Tell the Women We're Going," in which two maritally bored young men murder two girls, we end up in an appalling boredom.

Perhaps the most interesting among these three is Amos Oz, often named as one of modern Israel's best young writers. These eight stories, translated by Nicholas de Lange and Philip Simpson, were first published in the early 1960's. Two threads which run through all of them are those of spiritual isolation and sexual alienation. In "Where the Jackals Howl," a girl is seduced by a greasy old man who claims to be a father, a man she both loathes and loves: "Love and hate, they both breed surrender." In "The Nomad and the Viper," a woman becomes involved in a steamy sexual fantasy with a filthy goatherd. A fortyish divorcée in "Strange Fire" tempts her future son-in-law (and a later son of her first husband) with an incestuous proposition. Another girl, in "The Trappist Monastery," is the sexual plaything of an Israeli army unit. And in "Upon this Evil Earth," one of the Old Testament judges is more driven by his sexuality than by his love of God. All of these stories are permeated by a nihilistic view most forcefully expressed by a character in "The Way of the Wind": "how senseless is the hand that guides the vagaries of our own fate, that of the individual and that of the community alike." Or, as the author himself says somewhere else, "The days of a man's life are like water seeping into the sands; he perishes from the face of the earth unknown at his coming and unrecognised at his passing. He fades away like a shadow that cannot be brought back."

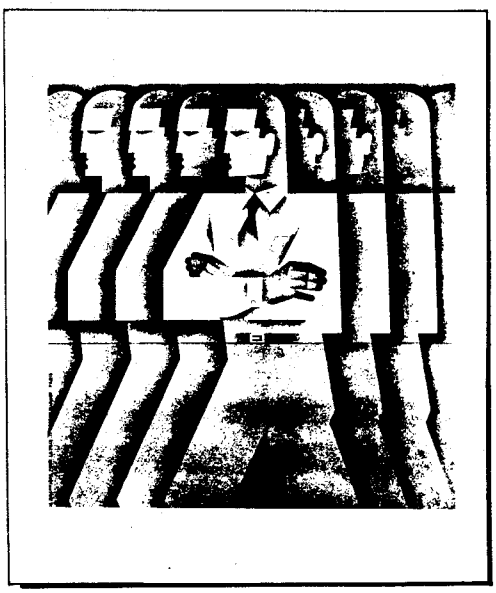
The people in Oz's stories are as gritty and hard as the cruel and arid Israeli landscape in which they move. But Israel, as Oz describes it, seems to be a land in which the "voice of reason, the voice of moderation, the voice of common sense" cannot be heard amid "an orgy of arrogant affluence" indulged in by the intoxicated masses and "their jubilant leaders, all of them skipping with yells of triumph toward the abyss." The beasts of the book's title await them: "Thus it is that we cannot see the jackals as they spring out of their hiding places."

These collections suggest something of the state of modern fiction. As with so many contemporary writers, Gardner and Carver seem to be afflicted with an uncertainty as to where they stand, neither of them able to provide any kind of moral perspective from which their fiction can be read and judged. Like Oz and too many other moderns, they can give us a vision of human life only as "water seeping into the sands," where it can give us neither refreshment for the mind nor life for the spirit. □

LIBERAL CULTURE

The Waterloo of the Liberal Claque

We might also call it the triumph of old Hollywood, of the Waspish sense of dignity and the Jewish sense of moral rectitude that were at the core of the old Hollywood cultural product. Anyway, *Reds*—the movie about an American who helped the Russian Gulag contractors (the obligatory lingo of liberal propaganda labels it as a film about "youthful idealism")—did not win. In spite of the liberal promoters' well-orchestrated claque, all those agitprop cocktail-party operatives, *Vogue's* desperate travails and the liberal reviewers' brotherhood, *Reds* lost its longed-for Oscar to a movie about religion and human dignity. Apparently good sense still lives somewhere in the tributaries of Wilshire Boulevard. □



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COMMENDABLES

Fast Mental Food

William F. Buckley, Jr.: ***Marco Polo, if You Can;*** Doubleday & Co.; New York.

by Becki Klute

What is America's answer to James Bond up to now? In William F. Buckley, Jr.'s latest, the redoubtable Blackford Oakes steps into fictional shoes that were worn in real life by Francis Gary Powers. We are back with our old friends (CIA spooks all) and lovers from Buckley's first three spy novels, and Blacky is in fine form. Having been involuntarily . . . ah . . . disengaged from "the service" at the end of *Who's on First,* he is reluctantly reinstated to assist in Operation Tango—crucial to U.S. security. And of the plot I'll say no more, as I consider reviewers (and anyone else) who prematurely reveal the workings of a mystery to be of the most despicable sort.

Marco Polo is a fast-paced, well-balanced mélange of glamor, sex, suspense and ideology (not necessarily in that order). It's obvious that Mr. Buckley likes his hero. He has made Blackford Oakes into everything Buckley himself might have been, could have been, perhaps even wanted to be. Oakes may be Buckley's "road not taken." And the reader, too, can hardly help but like Blacky Oakes.

It's apparent that Buckley has fun with this kind of writing: he can indulge his tongue-in-cheek style to his heart's content. I'll bet he makes wagers with himself as to how many of his readers will be familiar with the obscure words he slips in from time to time. And since a novelist is allowed to invent his own props, we discover such contraptions as the "Zapp microdot machine."

Like Alfred Hitchcock, Buckley can't resist appearing in his own creations. Even without the biographical similarities between B. Oakes and W. F. Buckley, a reader will not likely forget the name of the man who wrote of Blackford Oakes that he "began to read Buckley's *Up From Liberalism.* But his mind wandered. Hardly Buckley's fault."

Marco Polo, like *Saving the Queen, Stained Glass* and *Who's on First,* is a "fun read." Mr. Buckley reaches with it a broader, and probably different, audience than he does with his magazine, syndicated columns or TV program. And his chosen vehicle for conveying his ideology is certainly more polished than that of his compatriots Moss and De Borchgrave. *Marco Polo,* though, seems shorter than the others. It is rumored that Mr. Buckley does his novel-writing on airplanes.

Mrs. Klute is on the editorial staff of the Chronicles.

The Charms of *Convenance*

W.H. Davies: ***Young Emma;*** George Braziller; New York.

by Lindy Ellingwood

This love story shows the importance of manners and conventions in both the telling and the hearing of a tale. W.H. Davies, an English poet of the early 20th century, decided when he was about fifty to seek a wife with whom to establish a quiet domestic life in the countryside. *Young Emma* (written in 1924 but not published until 1981) is his account of how he found and married a twenty-three-year-old country girl on her own, and pregnant, in London.

Davies describes himself as a shy man, but mentions "how much my face has inspired others with trust and confidence." Strangers, especially young girls, frequently stop him in the street to ask for directions: "Do they take me for a professional guide?" It seems quite natural that when his eyes meet those of his future wife as she alights from a bus, she immediately smiles, waits for him to approach her, and then takes his arm and without hesitation unites her path with his.

Affection and courtesy are the hallmarks of the relationship, which begins with Emma's live-in attendance upon Davies. Davies recounts his efforts to cure the venereal disease he had contracted before he found Emma, and tells of trying to get the seemingly ignorant and unaware Emma to do the same. In similarly dispassionate fashion he describes Emma's miscarriage, in part brought on (possibly deliberately) by her wild romping and roughhousing with him. It is a mark of Davies's subtlety and decency that when one finishes this book, one remembers most the lovely romance rather than the somewhat sordid events which constitute much of the story.

Is this a snow job? The tone of the book is so uplifting that Davies and his subject seem acceptable on their own terms. He decided he wanted something, sought it patiently and honestly, and realized his dream most satisfactorily. Unconcerned with conventional morality, he acted with what *appears* to be dignity and honor. Compare Davies's book with a typical best seller that might be written today on a similar subject, and at once it is evident how charm has been replaced by dullness, dignity by sordidness. This book makes painfully clear how the manners and customs of Davies's culture are superior to those of the social environment from which current best sellers emerge. □

Miss Ellingwood is on the staff of the Chronicles.

What Price Study?

Fran Lebowitz: ***Social Studies;*** Random House, New York.

One would be well advised not to read Fran Lebowitz's books in public places—strangers tend to look askance at someone whose shoulders are shaking with silent laughter. Let's be honest, though, *Social Studies* does not equal the caliber of *Metropolitan Life,* her first effort. One can hear the ominous tolling of deadlines in several chapters. At some points her wit seems too close to pique, and here and there portions seem to be mere attempts to fill space.

There—justice has been served, and we can proceed simply to enjoy the choicest of the Lebowitz efforts. In looking at a book like this, one may be forgiven for having favorites—in fact, it would be unforgivable if

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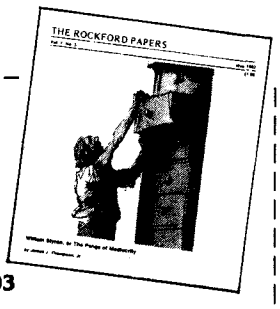

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one did not. That's the whole point of a collection of humorous essays; it's a sort of dessert cart from which one may pick and choose. It makes no difference if one selects the Napoleon or the strudel—everybody enjoys something.

Any dedicated smoker is guaranteed to share in her enthusiasm for the sport—along with her puzzled disdain for the more militant nonsmokers among us. Perhaps one day members of this "oppressed minority," as Ms. Lebowitz calls smokers, will collect their cellophane packets, matches and lighters and organize their own protests—with Lebowitz as their patron saint.

The Lebowitz travel tips are wickedly astute and to the point, but incomplete. For instance, she left out several essential facts:

—Whenever one must change planes, it is a certainty that the respective gates will be at opposite ends of the terminal.

—Planes *do* occasionally leave on time (contrary to Ms. Lebowitz's conviction), but only if one's incoming, connecting flight is late. The airline personnel thus have the pleasure of superciliously informing the panting passenger that he was supposed to have checked his luggage somewhere else half an hour ago.

—A vacation that begins with two hours of *Smokey and the Bandit Part II* (as a captive audience 20,000 feet in the air) may be seriously endangered.

She comments on apartment-hunting in the Big Apple, high-tech decor, the servant problem, children, pets—in short, about people, human beings, the way they choose to live. She exposes their affectations and the "in" fads to the uncompromising, if polluted, sunlight just outside her "one-room, rent-controlled slum apartment" and lets us chuckle with her at them.

Oscar Wilde she is not. One reads Fran Lebowitz for an occasional glimpse of others' (and one's own) sillinesses. And, in an era when we are afflicted with the Kurt Vonnegut-John Irving brand of merriment, perhaps that's enough. (BK) □

Humanism's Finest

Joseph Wambaugh: ***The Glitter Dome:*** William Morrow & Co.; New York.

Tom Wolfe considers Joseph Wambaugh a major contemporary writer and looks forward to each of his new novels. Wolfe is certainly not alone in his views. Wambaugh, a former Los Angeles policeman who writes about the precincts and the men he has known so well, seems to be one of our most humane writers these days; he attempts to create a complete world populated with characters about whom one can really care. His ribald, obscene, frequently black humor is hilarious rather than hateful. In *The Choirboys,* a vice squad's cynical wit serves as the men's protection and defense against the barrage of tragic and gruesome encounters which make up their daily routine; sudden shifts to genuine anger and horror become all the more effective in contrast to the antic merriment.

Dr. Fox advises a high-fashion boutique in Winnebago County, Illinois.

The Glitter Dome has most of the familiar elements of Wambaugh novels: the intense intimacy of police partners; the enormous stress of police work on marriages; the crackup or even suicide of a policeman no longer able to cope with an overwhelming reality; a celebration of LA's multifaceted ethnicity; the unspeakable, haunting terror of child abuse and, prevalent throughout, an indictment of the current liberal culture which vilifies and hampers police while glorifying and coddling criminals. His philosophy of social criticism was most overtly articulated in *The New Centurions,* Wambaugh's first book, but the author's condemnation of the glistening corruption of Hollywood and the larger corruption of a society with too much license is the implicit theme in this novel.

Less episodic than his previous books, *The Glitter Dome* is a coherent mystery thriller, but plot takes second place to the characterizations of the collective heroes and villains. Wambaugh's policemen are never sentimentalized or idealized; they are presented as forces for good in a world containing much evil. Without moralizing, Wambaugh's attitude toward the human condition is moral, populistic and understanding; one can say that nothing human is alien to him. (MEF) □

IN FOCUS

Our Yoke

Kennedy Fraser: ***The Fashionable Mind: Reflections on Fashion, 1970-1981;*** Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Mary Ellen Fox

Anyone who enjoyed Kennedy Fraser's sporadic columns on fashion in *The New Yorker* for the last decade or so should be pleased to see them collected in book form. They hold up quite well, and for a subject as ephemeral as fashion, date surprisingly little. Her observations on the pompous extravaganza of fashion shows, female dandyism, the body fitness cult, French couture and the avant-garde New York Soho scene are still relevant today. But Fraser's real contribution to the subject is her title essay, which extends the meaning of fashion to its broadest definition and points out its many ramifications. Fashion, Fraser maintains, influences much more than a way of dress or choice of "lifestyle." It is all-encompassing in its effect on our lives:

> It's there wherever political strategies are planned, movies made, books published, art exhibits mounted, critical columns turned out, dances danced, editorial policies formulated, academic theses germinated . . . Fashion usually is neither named nor

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noted but is simply the lens through which our society perceives itself and the mold through which it increasingly shapes itself.

This is not a revelation. Writers such as Cervantes and Flaubert emphasized the overwhelming—and often disastrous—effect the fashionable ideas of their time had on Don Quixote and Emma Bovary. But it is worth repeating when one is confronted with serious phenomena which affect our lives: the banality of feminist art (Chicago's "The Dinner Party"), the romance of the criminal (*vide* Mailer), the cinematic glamor of the Russian revolution *(Reds)*, the chic of terrorism (the hit tune "Sandinistas"). However, it may console a troubled observer of the contemporary scene to keep in mind that since the same mechanism operates both for hemlines and ideas, the vagaries of fashion will eventually bring about the demise of just those intellectual and cultural trends that one considers obnoxious. □

A Scholar's Blinders

Lewis A. Erenberg: ***Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930;*** Greenwood Press; Westport, Connecticut.

Mr. Erenberg has attempted to marry history to social commentary on the American culture at large. But this professor of history at Loyola University in Chicago seems to be afflicted with the East Coast tunnel-vision view of New York City. As he examines the development and changes that occurred in Gotham's night life during the period 1890-1930, he remarks several times that there is little need to look at the rest of the country because it simply followed New York's lead. True, he does admit that jazz and Dixieland and ragtime didn't exactly originate in New York, but that, apparently, is inconsequential. Although he notes that many, if not most, of the then-novel dance steps and styles originated in the Negro culture, he fails to examine anything about it other than its adaptation for the white folks' nightclub use.

Steppin' Out is informative, though: Mr. Erenberg successfully evokes the grandeur of the early "lobster palaces" and the grace and charm of professional dancers. He details the beginnings of restaurants like Delmonico's, which for the first time became refined enough to allow the presence of ladies. He proceeds to the birth of the cabarets which evolved from the restaurants, then on to the Prohibition-era speakeasies. We can learn about the personalities of the day: Vernon and Irene Castle, Maurice Mouvet and Florence Walton, Sophie Tucker, Gilda Gray, Flo Ziegfeld, Jimmy Durante. As one would expect from a professor of history, the book is meticulous and well documented, with copious footnotes and an extensive bibliography.

But Mr. Erenberg claims to be writing more than a history—indeed, he has assigned himself the ambitious task of explicating "the transformation of American culture." His approach to this portion of his project is, at best, superficial. He gives his remarks and explanations a scholarly tone, but actually he says nothing new. Somehow, these things just happened—at the turn of the century, people were simply "ready" to shift from home-centered to public entertainment. Later, people (for whatever reason) began to look

to Vernon and Irene Castle "for clues on new relationships between men and women." And, according to Mr. Erenberg, the cabaret audience was "grasping for clues on how to lead the life of leisure and expressiveness . . ." Why would a people who had always looked to the family, religious and civic leaders for prescriptions for how to live suddenly transfer these functions to mere entertainers? Mr. Erenberg does not tell us. His historical delineations of facts and personalities are excellent, but if one really wants to delve into the human components of the "transformation of American culture" he might be better served by reading Dreiser or Wharton than Erenberg. (BK) □

Merchandising Humanity's Imagination

Budd Schulberg: ***Moving Pictures; Memoirs of a Hollywood Prince;*** Stein and Day Publishers; New York.

Budd Schulberg, a noted American writer *(What Makes Sammy Run?* and *On the Waterfront)*, is the son of B.P. Schulberg, an authentic, true-blue, legendary movie mogul, a driving force behind the early MGM and Paramount empires. By dint of this circumstance, the younger Mr. Schulberg grew up knowing Hollywood as a place, a town, a notion, a symbol, an artifact. He thus has a story to tell. Unfortunately, he tells it with little flair, style or originality. He emerges from his own pages as an affable, decent man and a graceful writer; thus we must assume—as is often the case—that his very proximity to the subject somehow prevented him from expressing any profound insight or classy irony. He is a skillful collector of bygone moods, yet he is unable to overcome some *faiblesse* in handling anecdote as a medium, as if he were unaware of how a genuine writer should transcend a raconteur.

Thus, the most interesting aspect of the book is its potential to inspire musings about the rise of the Hollywood movie industry as a powerful cultural kingdom —a purely American phenomenon. From its beginnings, it was a Jewish industry, and its ethnic trademark was used as both an anti-Semitic epithet and an economic qualification. Everything that was perceived as the motion-picture industry's cynicism, greed, shoddiness and vulgarity was ascribed to its Jewishness. What was less visible then, and still is seldom discussed, is another aspect of that Jewish hegemony in that era of American mass culture. Those sons of penniless peddlers—many of whom were first-generation immigrants—who spent their early youth as apprentices to furriers, glove-makers and junk dealers on the sidewalks of

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the Lower East Side moved with astonishing, ferocious dynamism into this newly opened field of economic activity, where selling images—a cultural merchandise—suddenly became a route to unheard-of wealth, power and glories. They, themselves, were often cutthroats and gamblers, ruthless exploiters and workaholics, merciless schemers and frivolous hypocrites. But, paradoxical as it sounds, they were in love with the Little Lord Fauntleroy ethos, with the Louisa May Alcott moral aesthetics, with British-Victorian gentlemanliness as the paradigm of humanness, with New England's puritanical *Gemütlichkeit*, with the superbness of Yankee uprightness, with Norman Rockwell's romantic democracy; they believed in the pluralistic idealism of the American Dream. Whether they put their brutal energy into producing and marketing that Dream because there was a willing audience to pay for it or because they wished to strengthen the ideals inherent in it is obscure and debatable. They cheated and ripped off one another, but in their product they glorified old-fashioned heroism, simplistic integrity and sentimental decency. If the American Dream is an idea ensconced in some not-too-profound civilizational philosophy and moral principle, then those movie-making Jews gave it a shallow, but forceful and durable, visualness which deeply influenced three generations. They originated a new folklore derived from technological advances and the free market. This new folklore celebrated the American identity as the inexhaustible source of honorableness and honesty, and, as such, became inscribed in the consciousness of the world. Those early moguls may have wallowed in lechery, but they upheld seminal conventionality; they even knew how to present Marlene Dietrich, a card-carrying lesbian, as the most feminine of symbols. The fashionable urbanization of mores and pleasures that began in the 20's, the rampant materialism of Hollywood's Golden Age, somehow were transmuted under their treatment into an unextinguished yearning for vintage goodness.

By the 1920's every township in America had its secular shrine—the movie house—where, on Saturday evenings, existential fantasies and spiritual aspirations were worshiped. During those observances, the entertaining didactics of simple but wholesome values was consigned to the good guys who chased the bad ones. Those small-town temples molded everything, from passions to ethics. They are now gone with the subcultural winds of the 60's and 70's—and perhaps that's why we all are so miserable these days. (LT) □

WASTE OF MONEY

A Suede Stocking

Gail Sheehy: ***Pathfinders;*** William Morrow & Co.; New York.

by Carol Kettenburg

In 1976 Gail Sheehy elucidated the "passages," or life crises, that one faces in adulthood. Her latest book, *Pathfinders*, profiles people who have found paths through these passages and have attained a nirvanalike state of alleged well-being. This is in essence a how-to book, but one in which the author reveals a disconcerting lack of how-to knowledge on the subject. Imagine a pseudosophisticated "happiness-is" book that rejects the word happy as superficial and frivolous, then defines happiness (pardon me, *well-being*) in the dreary, self-liberation terms that masquerade these days as wisdom. All good pathfinders, says Ms. Sheehy, live by the notion that they cannot be content unless they have full control over their lives. Those suffering under another's control—be they wives under heartless husbands or executives under heartless corporations—must break away and forge paths more to their liking.

In all fairness to Ms. Sheehy, she does not condone irresponsible self-preoccupation or the dead end of narcissism. She even concedes that the surrender of some control to God may be healthy, as long as it is not carried to extremes. But the Christian "televangelists," with their message of total submission to God's will, inspire in her visions of oily preachers who prey on the weak and helpless. In what has by now become a banality of the self-appointed defenders of America's freedom, Ms. Sheehy condemns the Moral Majority for its coercive and totalitarian impulses. Despite her claims to tolerance and objectivity, Ms. Sheehy will tolerate no one who violates the accepted norms of "enlightened" intellectuals such as herself. For all her talk about pathfinding, Gail Sheehy offers little more than the meanderings of a mind hopelessly committed to the insipidities of pop psychology. □

Miss Kettenburg is a librarian at the San Diego Maritime Museum.

In the Mail

"Doctors Against Health" by Petr Beckmann; The Golem Press; Boulder, Colorado. A booklet by the editor and publisher of ***Access to Energy*** which presents evidence of how some doctors advocate policies that damage, rather than improve, public health as it relates to the benefits or dangers of nuclear electric power.

"Morning's Come Singing" by James Facos; American Poetry Press; Claymont, Delaware. A booklet of poetry by an associate professor of English at Norwich University.

The New Right Papers **edited by Robert W. Whitaker; St. Martin's Press; New York.** A collection of well-written essays expressing the principles, values, historical context and politics of the new right by such authors as William Rusher, Paul Weyrich, Richard Viguerie, Clyde Wilson and Thomas Fleming.

Letters to Barbara **by Glenn Meeter; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids, Michigan.** An exploration of human strengths and weaknesses in a novel about the struggle of an ethnic and religious minority in America of the 1950's.

Picaros, Madmen, Naïfs, and Clowns: The Unreliable First-Person Narrator **by William Riggan; Oklahoma University Press; Norman, Oklahoma.** An examination and definition of the fictional autobiographer in American, British, Spanish, German, Latin and Near Eastern literature, including such works as *Moll Flanders, Tristam Shandy, Lolita, The Tin Drum* and *The Catcher in the Rye.*

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Facing Grandeur

***Napoleon;* Written and directed by Abel Gance; A Robert A. Harris/ Images Film Archive Release from Zoetrope Studios.**

by Stephen Macaulay

The reputation of *Napoleon,* circa 1981, came to Detroit with a fervor surpassed only by that of the Rolling Stones' concerts which followed the film presentations by a few weeks. Perhaps it is indelicate to yoke Abel Gance's reconstructed 1927 film (commonly referred to as a "masterpiece") with Messrs. Jagger, Richard, et al., but the presentation of *Napoleon* reminded me of a rock concert more than anything else. (Before continuing, I should point out my perspective: when I viewed *Napoleon* last November, I was 27, the veteran of several rock performances, though the observer of recent ones from without, as time has taken its toll.)

To wit: the film was presented in an auditorium where such concerts have been held (though today football stadiums are *de rigueur:* damn the acoustics, the gross is the thing!). Upon entering the lobby, I was confronted by a table covered with *Napoleon* memorabilia: buttons showing the star's visage (which has an eerie similarity to rock's Rod Stewart, eerie considering the possibility of a remake), posters, the score for Carmine Coppola's *Napoleon* theme song, etc. Then there was the film itself.

I can vividly recall seeing Frankenheimer's *Grand Prix* in 1967 at the now defunct Cinerama Theater. Not only is it a film for the extraordinarily large screen, but Frankenheimer employs the split-screen effect that is a hallmark of Gance's film. I recently saw *Grand Prix* on television. Though the impact of the Monte Carlo race wasn't quite there—I didn't lean into the curves while sitting on my couch—the film worked in the reduced format. There is no way that *Napoleon* could ever work on television: it is a spectacle and, as such, it requires tremendous physical space. To continue with the comparison with rock music: I imagine that if the Rolling Stones were to perform in a suburban basement or back yard rather than on an elaborately engineered stage, they would be no better than the combo that plays at the neighborhood bar. They require the setting of the extravaganza. (Note: I'm sure that some are thinking that under *any* circumstances most *any* musical group would be better than the Stones but, regardless of individual tastes, it is necessary to recognize that they are certainly one of the most commercially significant recording groups and that, like other social diseases, The Stones won't go away by being ignored.)

So what can one say about *Napoleon?* A number of adjectives leap to mind, ready-set in the boldface type used in newspaper ads. The camera work (Gance was a pioneer in using the camera as a portable eye rather than as an obelisk) and editing (he was also a master at quick cutting, which is a necessity for silent films, since otherwise the viewer tends to nod off, especially when the film runs for approximately four hours) certainly deserve acclaim. The mere logistics of the movie (not only the cast of thousands and the props, but simply the amount of film exposed) make Gance qualified for some sort of honorific.

But what I think is most impressive about *Napoleon* is that although the film, when reduced to essentials, is corny, it is captivating. In other words, it is more like a novel by Dickens than, say, *Apocalypse Now,* which was also shot on the Grand Scale. Characters are stylized, often to the point of being caricatures, situations are contrived (e.g. Napoleon has a Tricolor handy to use as a sail on a broken-down boat) and so on; still, I found myself completely charmed. I had intimations of being something of a von Blucher to Gance's *Napoleon* when I entered Ford Auditorium, yet I closely guarded my program as I exited.

Francis Ford Coppola deserves praise and pity. The praise is for his role in making *Napoleon* available. The pity is for his foolishness for having done so: Abel Gance was far better in 1927 than most filmmakers are in the 80's. □

Mr. Macaulay visits Detroit-area movie theaters.

The Poignancy of Cheapness

***Pennies from Heaven;* Written by Dennis Potter; Directed by Herbert Ross; MGM/United Artists.**

by Eric Shapearo

A perspicacious European writer remarked in one of his novels that the contemporary person's sufferings are best expressed by pop songs' vocabulary. He pointed out that, in our time, someone who is afflicted with an unrequited and injurious love notices that his grief and despondency are best articulated through chintzy lyrics. The more trivial the cliché one finds in those words, the keener is one's understanding of what is happening to him.

The people who conceived and produced *Pennies from Heaven* must have discovered a similar truth. They seem to say that the routine "dream factory" Hollywood output during the Depression-dreary 30's had a much more delicate and complex interrelationship with the American sensibilities of that era than we suspected. They seem to be suggesting that the inane MGM musicals

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created a psychological ambiance which conditioned the American mind in a perplexing, obscure manner—people may have been aware of the surrealism of those movies, yet they somehow believed in their potential to engender reality, to reflect some hazy truths. In other words, a mystique was accepted as both reverie and recipe for living; a placebo turned out to be a prescription for cultural norms.

Thus, a movie has been created, or perhaps concocted, that dabbles in a rather ambitious literary proposition. Tragedy as man's rendevous with fate, an echo of *The Great Gatsby's* simplicity of human destinies, is mixed here (not too convincingly) with Brechtian cynicism about the human condition and with a pictorial symbolism of the highest caliber. There are splashes of cheap anachronism: the sexual etiquette of the 70's seems to be in open conflict with that of the 30's. But, all in all, the story of an unprepossessing sheet-music salesman—who lives by the catechism of Hollywood hits, who may or may not believe in them but constantly tries to introduce them into his own life, who loves to make love but also seduces and abuses women and turns a virginal country teacher into a fallen woman, and who finally is killed by the junction of platitudinous coincidences—amounts to a rewarding visual collage of cultural metaphors from the 1930's and America at that time. □

MUSIC

Jazz Records: Rowles & More

by Doug Ramsey

For at least 30 years, Jimmy Rowles has played piano essentially the same way he plays it now. His style is elliptical, full-bodied, spare, sly, harmonically astonishing, futuristic, full of historical references. He sometimes seems to have stopped in midsolo to ponder his next move, only to plunge or meander back into his improvisation in some unexpected direction. He is likely to stride and shout in the manner of the Harlem piano giants of the 20's and 30's. But he may also open up the solo, allowing his right hand the freedom to mince about while his left finds new ways of fragmenting the rhythm. His quotes come from an astounding variety of sources, but most frequently from obscure songs that thrived briefly on Broadway, in movies or on the hit parade. He is gloriously unpredictable.

Mr. Ramsey is a jazz critic who lives in San Francisco.

It has always been like that with Rowles, although his surprise quotient may be slightly higher these days. Suddenly, however, he has been discovered: he is everywhere on jazz records—as a leader, as a sideman, as a solo performer. Perhaps his time has come. Rowles is a more advanced pianist than Duke Ellington would ever have claimed to be. But there are similarities between the two that make Rowles a stunning interpreter of the compositions of both Ellington and Strayhorn. Comparisons drawn from his splendid new Columbia album "Jimmy Rowles Plays Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn" (Columbia FC-37639) make two things clear. At few points in his playing does he directly quote or borrow from either Ellington the pianist or Ellington the composer. And yet in each piece Rowles perfectly captures the Ellington/Strayhorn spirit.

His interpretation of Mercer Ellington's "Jumpin' Punkins" mirrors Duke's orchestral arrangement, but it is an invention, not a transcription. His "Take the A Train" paraphrases the Strayhorn melody, borrows from the celebrated Ray Nance trumpet solo, alludes to the famous out-chorus—and is pure Rowles. Somehow, Rowles is able to summon the nuances of trombonist Juan Tizol on Ellington's "Lost in Meditation" as well as the sinuous feeling of alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges on Strayhorn's exotic "Isfahan." This album, adorned only by Rowles's technique, taste, imagination and iconoclasm, is a milestone in his career and an evocative tribute to two of America's great musical figures.

In "Music's the Only Thing That's on My Mind" (Progressive Records 7009) Rowles is joined by George Mraz, one of the bright stars among bassists since his arrival in the United States from Czechoslovakia in the late 60's. Mraz solos with clarity and grace on many of the pieces and works effectively behind Rowles throughout.

Rowles sings four songs on this album. His voice is pleasantly rough, and he uses that musicianly phrasing that seems to come naturally to improvisers. Rowles is one of the world's leading collectors of obscure songs. "You Started Something," by Bing Crosby's one-time singing partner Al Rinker, is a forgotten remnant of 1930's popular culture, and George Brown's "I Never Loved Anyone" deserved a better fate than its consignment to the Potter's Field of music.

Rowles and tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims have produced "I Wish I Were Twins" (Pablo 2310-868), in which Sims performs a version of "Georgia on My Mind" invested with distinctive plaintiveness. Over the years Sims's tone has deepened, even roughened, but he has never lost the dancing, rhythmic properties that made him stand out from the crowd of Lester Young disciples in the 1940's.

Susannah McCorkle concentrates on two great lyricists in "Over the Rainbow: The Songs of E.Y. 'Yip' Harburg" (Inner City IC-1131) and "The Songs of Johnny Mercer" (Inner City IC-1101). Miss McCorkle takes a straightforward

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approach, but still invests the pieces with the phrasings and subtleties of jazz. There is no mistaking where her heart is when she inflects "One for My Baby" and "Over the Rainbow" with blue notes or makes "Ding Dong the Witch is Dead" a romp reminiscent of a horn player riding the crest of exhilaration created by a fine rhythm section. She sings in tune; her diction is clear but not fussy. Her choice of material and accompanists is impeccable, all rare qualities.

STAGE

The Epistemology of Reporting

***How I Got That Story;* Written by Amlin Gray; Directed by Carole Rothman; Westside Arts Theater.**

by Robert R. Reilly

Amlin Gray's *How I Got That Story* opened off-Broadway at the Westside Arts Theater on February 17 to rave reviews and wide acclaim. The general feeling seemed to be that Gray has written *the* Vietnam play, a definitive statement on our misconceived, nightmarish military venture in Southeast Asia. The *New York Daily News* expressed its satisfaction with sophomoric platitudes. The *New York Times* went no further in investigating the meaning of the play than literally reiterating its plot. Both missed the none-too-subtle point of the play: its savage attack on the press, or rather on the particular mind-set or point of view that the press, during the war, adopted as its own.

Their myopia is as natural as goiter among the mountaineers. The topicality of the Vietnam War was similarly distracting to the deeper purposes of the film *Apocalypse Now,* which reviewers insisted on seeing as a "statement" on the war. In an attempt to shed that topicality, *Apocalypse Now* took its audience on a long trip "up river," with increasing degrees of unreality, to reach a level of abstraction at which a universal statement could be made about the human soul, about trying to live beyond good and evil. That Gray is talking about more than just Vietnam is obviously indicated in his choice of a fictional name, "Amboland," for the Southeast Asian locale of his play's action. A young reporter arrives in Amboland to cover the war there with the hope that "If I keep my eyes open, I can understand the whole world." He is confronted by "The Historical Events," thirty-some individual character incarnations cleverly played by the only other actor in the show. The first talking incarnation is the American head of Trans Pan Global news service in Amboland who tells the reporter he is sure the reporter will view all sides and state the truth "as he believes it." To which the reporter responds, no, "as I see it." His confident objectivity is based upon his own faith that in reporting the "facts," he will be able "to find reality in history." It soon becomes apparent that the young man's impartial way of viewing reality will guarantee that he understands nothing, rather than everything. When he admits his growing confusion to Madame Ing, the dictatorial ruler of Amboland, she reassures him, "Be patient. Soon you will understand even less."

Through a series of vignettes, the young reporter is brought low by the epistemology of reporting and is left at the end living in an abandoned refrigerator carton, eating off a nearby pile of garbage, entranced by the glare of falling magnesium flares. Gray passes an unabashed verdict on the self-destructive nature of the news' neutrality toward reality. It is futile to try to learn anything of value from "facts" alone; such a notion even makes it impossible to live as a human being. The reporter fails on every level of human engagement—whether he is proposing marriage to a bar girl, serving as a drug courier for a corrupt army officer, attempting to adopt an Amboland orphan or simply living as a peasant. The absurd nature of "news" is made explicit by a photojournalist with his left arm missing and his leg in a cast who is proud of "this incredible shot of this arm flying off (it was a little underexposed but . . .)" that he took after stepping on a land mine: he later insists on going down with a crashing jet because "When's the last time you saw a plane crash shot from inside the plane?", and is last seen as a triple amputee on a pushcart, still taking pictures with his remaining limb.

The pilgrim's regress of the reporter begins with his reaction to the self-immolation of a monk: "No, I'm not watching, I'm not here, I'm a reporter." During a fire fight, the panicked reporter blurts out: "If I'm not getting facts there is no purpose to my being here."

His final *raison d'être* is defined as "imprintment" by the Trans Pan Global chief and sounds like an epitaph: "the reporter goes to cover a country and the country covers him." We have every reason to believe that it's exactly what Mr. Gray thinks happened to all the "aces" from the *Times, Post,* NBC, etc. not long ago.

"News" is a stepchild of the fact/value dichotomy which peremptorily assumes that the only certain, objective knowledge available to man's mind is the empirical data of "facts." All supposed knowledge by which man holds one thing higher than another in moral worth or goodness is illusory and totally subjective. This distinction, which served as the foundation of modern social science, has been totally discredited by philosophers like Leo Strauss and Eric

Mr. Reilly is with the USICA in Washington, D.C.

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Voegelin but is contemptuously ignored by the most formative component of contemporaneity—the media. The "facts" are up front and in the "news" sections and the "values" are neatly relegated to the editorial pages. But "news," by its very nature, cannot be neutral. Carl Becker observed, "History is not fact, but the interpretation of fact." This is true of "news" as well. The very process of selecting what is "news" is an interpretative act itself. Even modern physics acknowledges that the act of observing changes the thing itself, so the objective neutrality of the reporting observer is even physically impossible. Besides being specious, the fact/value distinction is also disabling, as Gray's play dramatizes. The truth of a political community will be found in the understanding of a citizen, not of a social scientist who abstracts from it a behavioral model. One will learn nothing of love from observing sex; in fact, applying a behavioral model to a political community will ultimately destroy it, as the observation of sex may undermine the capacity for loving. Whether Gray wished to go so far as to say that value neutrality destroys civilization is not entirely clear. But we believe in interpretation.

To see that *How I Got That Story* is not *the* play about Vietnam, one need only remember that the Vietnam War is not yet over. It is still going on. More people have been killed or displaced in Southeast Asia since the American withdrawal than during the whole American involvement there. Only the journalists are gone. They are no longer getting the story. They are not observing. They never did get the story. *How I Got That Story* is *the* play about "how the story got away." An arm, a leg, a country at a time . . . □

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

The Paradigms of War

by Alan J. Levine

In April 1915 Allied forces landed on Turkey's Gallipoli peninsula in an attempt to force Turkey to surrender. The resulting campaign was one of the disasters of that disastrous war: Winston Churchill became a scapegoat, and the Gallipoli defeat became a major factor in his political career.

Recently an Australian film, *Gallipoli,* opened in New York. It has been highly—and for once deservedly—praised as one of the finest war films ever made. Although some reviewers have tried to read various political convictions into it, the ritualistic poses of the usual antiwar movie are conspicuously absent. Yet, on closer examination, it does fit certain stereotypes and provokes much thought, not only about World War I and war in general, but about the way people *think* about war.

Whether consciously or not, people seem to think about war in terms which are neither abstract nor specific; they usually think in terms of *paradigms,* or models, often of some particular war, or wars, that have particularly affected the consciousness of our society. It would be fair to say that most people's thinking about war has been formed by the paradigms of World Wars I and II, Vietnam and, to a lesser extent, Korea. When we consider carefully the paradigms, or stereotypes, of these wars, several puzzling features of the popular perception may come into focus.

Gallipoli, intentionally or not, fits into and expresses the paradigm most people have absorbed of World War I—a paradigm which is oversimplified, to be sure, but which possesses a nugget of truth. World War I is seen as an unnecessary conflict between basically similar countries. No vital issue was at stake, and, in the eyes of many, it was a pointless butchery of millions by incompetent military leaders. At least until the 1960's World War I was *the* symbol of meaningless horror for Western society. As Paul Fussell and others have shown, there was a strong tendency to conceive of war itself, all war, in the image of the "Great War"—although, in fact, no other modern conflict has much resembled it, either morally, politically or militarily.

Rightly or not, the acceptance of such a paradigm had far-reaching consequences, as one tends to expect that future situations will resemble the paradigm. *The paradigm of one war becomes the paradigm of all wars.* If one believes the last war was unjustified and insane, he assumes that the next one will be too. The possible means to prevent one war are thought to be appropriate for the avoidance of future conflicts. Unfortunately the paradigm of World War I, whatever its worth as a picture of that war, was the worst possible preparation for dealing with nazi Germany. The paradigm seemed to counsel the use of appeasement policies, the results of which are well-known. The dominant paradigm of World War II, by contrast, remains for most people the clearest example of a "just war." Anglo-Americans, at least, could see tangible gains and advances; those who liberated the concentration camps could see the justification of the war firsthand. If the aftermath of the war did not quite match the delirious forecasts of 1941-1945, this did not really undermine people's belief that the war had been justified.

The paradigm of World War II—a sorry but necessary struggle against totalitarian aggression—was not a bad preparation for the postwar era. In moral terms, neither the Cold War nor the Korean conflict was very different from World War II. For all the energetic efforts of Marxist apologists to obscure the

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facts, it was clear that the war had been begun deliberately; no one could pretend that the communists represented any "legitimate" nationalist or anticolonial movement. Few people in the West doubted that Korea was a just war.

Vietnam—it is typical of the confusion surrounding that war that it was not even called by its right name, the Second Indochina War—is probably *the* paradigm of war for our time. It is unnecessary to recount the paradigm of Vietnam, for it has been dunned into our heads by the liberal media establishment for a decade and a half. Its version is simple enough: the war was stupid and unnecessary—a war of aggression against a legitimate nationalist regime, a disastrous military failure.

Recently there has been a growing disposition to question the validity of the popular opinion of Vietnam, but the day of its reversal is still far off. The Vietnam paradigm is still very much alive, and there have even been attempts to revise the paradigm of World War II to make it resemble that of Vietnam. This "Vietnamization" of World War II has been noted by Norman Podhoretz, and examples of it have been contaminating the book racks, TV and films for years. But the strength of this tendency—contemptible and dangerous as it is—should not be exaggerated. In fact an opposite, and perhaps stronger, tendency also exists to paint a simplified, romanticized picture of World War II as a pure crusade which won universal support among right-thinking people. Unfortunately, this sort of "positive" paradigm can be misleading—and morally paralyzing. In the real world, alas, things are a bit more complicated.

Whatever *should* have been the case, many Americans, right up until Pearl Harbor, were unable to recognize the issues involved in World War II, and measures to defend the Western world had to be taken in the teeth of their bitter resistance. Nor was World War II a neat line-up of good guys and bad guys, which is perhaps best exemplified by the alliance of the Soviet Union with the United States and Britain. Needless to say, this should not affect one's assessment of the morality of the war. The point is that moral choices require mental effort backed by the determination to carry through a correct course of action. Good and evil do exist, and it is possible to choose between them—but they do not always wear clear, easy-to-read labels. Even in World War II, one of history's clearest issues, it was necessary to think and choose; romanticized versions of that war do us a disservice by obscuring this fact. And it was the oversimplified paradigm of World War I, blindly projected onto a different situation, that helped to pave the way for World War II. The paradigms of war may be inevitable, but they can also be dangerous. Perhaps we cannot entirely avoid thinking about the future in terms of paradigms derived from the past, but it is important to realize that we are doing so. □

A Syndicated Historian

by **Denison Holland Bourne**

> Far from exerting himself to master his own partisan passions, [he] has dug up an obscure sentence from Coolidge, has refused to tell his readers where he got it, has used it to prove something that it does not prove either by itself or in its original context, and has ignored an explicit assertion by Coolidge.

This passage sounds as if it has been lifted from a professor's critique of the slipshod work of a lazy and deceitful graduate student. But no, it comes from an article in the Autumn 1981 issue of *The American Scholar* entitled "Coolidge and the Historians" and written by one Thomas B. Silver. Mr. Silver's barbs fly at none other than Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., one of America's most honored historians. In a perfect world of dispassionate and gentlemanly scholars, Silver's trenchant dissection of Schlesinger's treatment of Calvin Coolidge in *The Crisis of the Old Order* (volume one of *The Age of Roosevelt)* would have a devastating effect on Professor Schlesinger's reputation. But Schlesinger need lose no sleep over this. The liberal ideologues will not allow one small article by an obscure historian to undermine Schlesinger's authority.

Mr. Bourne is an observer of contemporary trends in American scholarship.

All historians overreach themselves at times, and in the long and tedious process of writing a book they occasionally misuse a source or allow their prejudices to creep into their rendering of the past. Schlesinger cannot be acquitted on these grounds; his entire career evidences a proclivity for twisting and distorting the historical record to advance his ideology. Schlesinger is really not an historian; he is, rather, a talented myth-maker who has devoted his skills to promoting the liberals' vision of society. Wishful thinking, deftly processed into scientific inquiry and not the pursuit of truth, has guided Professor Schlesinger's search for a usable past.

Schlesinger took the historical profession by storm when at twenty-eight—an age at which most historians have yet to shepherd their first precious and pedantic little article into print—he won the Pulitzer Prize with *The Age of Jackson.* One does not expect much from the Pulitzer Committee, as its selections frequently reflect the standards touted by the king of yellow journalism, Joseph Pulitzer; that the committee should recently have bestowed its imprimatur upon Miss Janet Cooke seems eminently reasonable. But the historians who hailed Schlesinger's book should have known better. The Andrew Jackson who emerges from Schlesinger's pages bears scant resemblance to the Tennessean who dominated American politics in the

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1830's. Wonder of wonders: Schlesinger's Jackson is a 20th-century liberal, a Franklin D. Roosevelt in frontier garb.

To the credit of the historical profession, the next generation of historians subjected Schlesinger's view of Jacksonianism to scathing criticism. The same cannot be said of Schlesinger's three-volume work of the 1950's, *The Age of Roosevelt.* American historians still generally accept as holy writ Schlesinger's view of the 1920's and 1930's. The FDR of Schlesinger's imagination stands with the great heroes of Western civilization. After America suffers a decade of listlessness, corruption and heartlessness under the Republicans, Schlesinger's Roosevelt sweeps into the White House, saves America from the malefactors of wealth and restores decency to American politics. Strong men still weep tears of joy when they leaf through Schlesinger's pages.

It seemed natural that America's leading maker of liberal myths should find a home in the Presidential administration of John F. Kennedy. Schlesinger became one of Kennedy's courtiers, scurrying about the White House in tireless attendance upon the young king and his queen. Schlesinger loved the limelight and the perquisites of power, loved them so much that he has spent his subsequent years pining away in New York City and gazing wistfully southward, hoping to glimpse the shimmering tower of a resurrected Camelot-on-the-Potomac.

To occupy the long days of his exile Schlesinger set out to recount the glories of the New Frontier. The resulting book —*A Thousand Days*—reveals how Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., aided by John F. Kennedy, came within a hairsbreadth of saving the republic once and for all from the forces of evil (i.e., Republicans, the rich and assorted right-wing troglodytes). With his appetite whetted by this exercise in hagiography, Schlesinger next undertook the canonization of Bobby Kennedy. The book that grew from these labors stands as a supreme achievement in the field of biography-as-fiction.

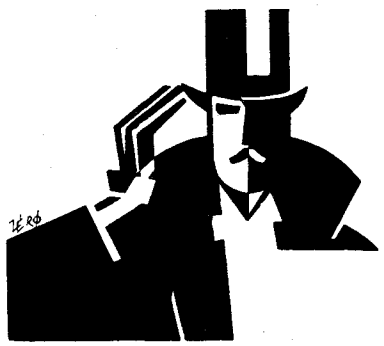
Should Teddy Kennedy ever consummate his lust by forcing his way into the White House, he will probably beckon Professor Schlesinger to take up residence with him as court historian. And with good reason: no sycophantic medieval chronicler ever served a king more faithfully than Schlesinger has served the liberal politicos of 20th-century America. Perhaps some young scholar of the future will win a Pulitzer Prize with a book entitled "The Age of Schlesinger, the Syndicated Historian"; it would make fascinating reading as a study in how liberal ideology shapes the present by distorting the past—that is, by pulling history down to the art of partisan column-writing. □

ART

Those Captivating Volumes

John Russell: *The Meanings of Modern Art;* The Museum of Modern Art/Harper & Row; New York.

John Keegan and Joseph Darracott: *The Nature of War;* Holt, Rinehart & Winston; New York.



Mr. Russell's *oeuvre* carries a risky title: many modern-art manifestoes flaunt the phenomenological revelation that art should have no meaning at all—it is exactly this meaninglessness that makes it modern. The preceding sentence may sound like a word play—it is not. The enigmas of meaning which haunt philosophy and linguistics are neatly compounded by what happened during the last century in the visual arts. Whether Mr. Russell has satisfactory answers to those questions is debatable, although he honestly tries to be as clear and as meticulous an explicator as he is able. Yet certain aspects, which seem to us both crucial and little explored by the contemporary art historians, are alive and well in Mr. Russell's effort. What is the immanent link between modern art, visual avant-garde and ideological totalitarianism—the sociopolitical scourge of the 20th century? Why has the destruction of the despised bourgeois sensitivities resulted in modern art's pro-depersonalization drive? We would love to know more about these facets of Mr. Russell's belief that ". . . the history of art, if properly set out, is the history of everything."

The Nature of War has a much simpler but more terrifying premise. It's a huge pictorial almanac of things military, warlike and martial as seen through the eyes of great painters, much of which has been immortalized in their artistic heritage. It was put together by two distinguished British historians, experts on war studies. Mr. Darracott is also a specialist in the history of art. The album provides not only an exhaustive survey of almost everything that has been depicted and drawn as slaughter, massacre, heroism of the battlefield, horror and honor of soldiery and combat. It also contains an explanatory text of historical information, detail and data on the presented images —an approach which is bound to elicit the appreciation of military history buffs.

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THE AMERICAN PROSCENIUM

Transatlantic Chats

In January the Committee for the Free World held a conference in Washington, D.C. at which debaters from both sides of the Atlantic pondered our common present dangers. The CFW is a worthy outfit dedicated to the restoration of rationality in an age of neoscholasticism, when dogmas determine intellectual efforts rather than vice versa. The general theme of the meeting could be described as a two-day divagation on the Atlantic alliance—its instrumentality, logic and mystique. Fifteen distinguished Europeans (among them Jean-Francois Revel, Ludwig Graf von Stauffenberg, Luigi Barzini and Lord Chalfont) confronted fifteen assertive Americans (among them, well, Irving Kristol) on those elusive matters. There was plenty of European charm and sophistication of thought cast against American bluntness, and beautifully conceived European relativism collided with the made-in-America concoction of idealism *cum* tenacity. Americans were concerned with recent manifestations of anti-Americanism in the European peace movement; the Europeans tried to explain that actually America is not hated but loved on the Continent. Both sides complained about unilateralism, isolationism and neutralism as ideological forces that could wreck everything, from NATO to Western civilization. A British social democrat warned that there are people in Europe who live and think in accordance with new values which prompt them to be very, very critical of America. But he failed to explain what those new values are—whether they free people from gastric distress, or from the threat of Soviet totalitarianism—thereby reinforcing our suspicion that there does exist such a thing as timeless values whose rewards are perhaps best exemplified by freedom and good digestion. Mr. Barzini, in fine Mediterranean tradition, presented the world, life, politics and military preparedness as a lovable mess. Some Germans claimed that the blue-jeaned and American-rock-singing throngs prove the inconsequentialness of the peace movement, but this is an old-hat argument; it proves only that American cultural imperialism is a fiasco which has degenerated into sleazy syncretism. American credibility suffered a blow when a certain Mr. Sonnenfeldt, a stalwart of Nixo-Kissingerian détente, blithely announced that their policy had contributed to the "devolution," "dilution" and "destabilization" of East European satellite regimes. None of the Europeans was discourteous enough to give Mr. Sonnenfeldt a well-deserved raspberry.

We listened in bemusement to the tournament of ideas. There was much talk about war between the superpowers —something we dare to doubt. Russia does not need all-out war; it needs only Vietnams, Angolas, El Salvadors—small, effective showdowns in which the West, diluted and destabilized by the Screen Actors Guild, peace marchers, et al., has no chance. In a perverse way, the convulsively hateful crowds in Amsterdam and Bonn who chant anti-American obscenities are correctly sensing Russia's contrived nonbelligerency and America's desperate inability to unravel the monstrous lie by any means other than one great, final battle. European pacifism and the demise of NATO seem to us to be the inevitable consequences of America's catastrophic ignorance of the nature of communist power. The roots of our fallacies go very deep, and the blame can be evenly distributed among Yale, Cambridge, Sorbonne, *Le Monde, New York Times,* Hollywood and the Old Vic.

Apropos of the *Times,* or the *Post,* or any other organ of enlightened American opinion which basks in the First Amendment and to which Fidel Castro owes so much: with the exception of reporting on official (Professor Rostow, Ambassador Kirkpatrick) or semiofficial (Professor Kissinger) utterances, those voices of liberal decency and fairness were perfectly mum on the subject of the CFW conference. No reporting, no news fit to print, not one word about the first-rate names of men and women who *could* have said openly that the peace movement in Europe stinks, that suicidal imbecility, politely called appeasement or Chamberlainery and propped up with dirty Russian money, is once again *ante portas,* and that the bomb is ticking.

President Reagan's Choices

Ever since his inauguration, we have expressed forebodings about Mr. Reagan's choice of entourage and style. We are sorry to say that the correctness of our premonitions has exceeded our earlier fears. Judging from the way things look at this point in Mr. Reagan's administration, and from the current White House ambiance, we are witnessing tendencies which may have catastrophic dimensions. Mr. Reagan may prove to be more destructive to what *we* call the conservative orientation than anyone before him. The departure of Lyn Nofziger and Martin Anderson from his immediate circle of power, though not politically and practically fateful, transgresses basic principles of personnel management and proves that even relatively simple conservative and libertarian influences may be excluded from the image of allegedly conservative policy-making.

The disaster goes much deeper. Mr. Reagan seems not to understand that modern conservatism, like modern liberalism, is an intellectual and spiritual proposition—its strength lies precisely in its freedom from trivial political pragmatism. The President has surrounded himself with Republican managers whose cleverness can be tested only on the level of smart political moves and shallow administrative victories. Intellectually and

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conceptually, however, they are mostly lowbrows who seem to scorn any ideological approach to man, society, democracy, country, civilization, social responsibilities—key notions in our precarious historical situation. If Mr. Reagan had been elected simply as a Republican, we would have little quarrel with him. But he is on record as being a *conservative* bearer of *conservative* values, and he seems to be mauling those values worse than they have ever been mauled before. His style demeans his substance. We might object to his Madison Avenue approach to shaping the American civilizational message, but the President's big-studio Hollywood tactics seem to us much more disastrous. To choose a successful nursing-home entrepreneur to handle America's PR with the rest of the world is ludicrous. Regardless of how nice or how smart the man may be, his lack of fundamental qualifications for the job will cost us—as a country—a lot, although perhaps not immediately or directly. His usefulness at the sordid and unpalatable gala soirees at the White House—which are supposed to attest to the "splendor" of the Presidency, but which make an impression of unpleasant sleaziness by mixing grubbily bejeweled and shallow millionairesses with the liberal rabble from California show biz and New York "society"—will, more and more, justify and magnify the disdainful whispers that Mr. Reagan is not *our* President. Up to now, those whispers came mainly from unionists, welfare recipients, radical posthippiedom and the liberal intelligentsia. But conservatives are beginning to murmur it, too—and louder all the time.

Frittered Away

Perhaps the best opportunity in post-World War II history for an anticommunist offensive seems to have been frittered away by the Reagan administration. The messy muddle of ineffectual sanctions, the clumsy quadrille between the Allies' greed and the international banking community's crocodile tears, the self-appointed conceptualists who seem unable to distinguish between Poland and Zimbabwe, all provide ample evidence that the essential benefits from Polish events are being dolefully squandered. Lighting candles and singing "Let Poland Be Poland" might have been an attractive sentimental overture, but what does it have in common with effective ideological warfare? The emphasis, as concocted by the show-biz experts at the International Communication Agency, was all wrong. What the Poles have demonstrated is communism's complete bankruptcy as an ideological system and as a moral theory of social justice. *This* is the message which should have been relentlessly and continuously projected over the airwaves and in the literature produced by the U.S. government. The subjugation of the Poles and the abject political measures of the military dictatorship are deplorable and condemnable, but they are not of much immediate concern to Voice of America's listeners in Nicaragua or Indonesia. What counts is the Polish triumph in dismantling Marxism as a doctrine and as a cause to galvanize believers. Apparently this idea did not occur to the minds Mr. Reagan mobilized to explain world affairs to the world.

Hillsdale

Geographically, "proscenium" is not exactly the best description of the place where Hillsdale College is located. In fact, it is deep in the middle of southern Michigan, somehow ensconced in its own remoteness. Yet when one arrives in the area, which some people from Manhattan's Park Avenue might describe as backwoods, and spends some time on the campus, one acquires an unexpected but unmistakable inkling that what is going on here may be of more importance than anything happening these days on Pennsylvania Avenue, Broadway or the beaches of Malibu. One is pervaded by a feeling that if, in the latter places, one is facing the present, then in Hillsdale and at Hillsdale College one has come into contact with America's future.

The gist of the liberal-conservative contention in our time is of a cultural nature. However, only the liberal side seems to be aware of that, and it makes the best use of the cultural weapons at its disposal. The conservatives generally tend to think that their economic and political arguments are so accurate, so overwhelming, that sociocultural considerations play only a minor role in the strife. Thus, when they are confronted by necessity to resort to their cultural arsenal, conservatives are inclined to settle for vacuous slogans which are often embarrassingly shallow.

But not in Hillsdale. At that college, whose ideological profile and self-image are both unabashedly conservative, cultural responsibility and social awareness are unmistakably the substance of the educational process and the intellectual extracurricular activities. Hillsdale has evolved an affiliated program called the Center for Constructive Alternatives, whose seminars have become an institution within the conservative movement of ideas. The college's president, Dr. George C. Roche III, an historian with impressive credentials and looks, is the driving force behind the entire operation. We firmly believe that Hillsdale—even if it now stands for only a geographical location—will, sooner or later, become one of those notions that symbolize some deeper meanings in the American culture.

That's Exactly What We've Been Saying All the Time

According to an Associated Press survey of high-achieving teen-agers in 1981:

—90 percent of those surveyed said they favored increased defense spending, compared with just 44 percent in the 1975-76 survey.

—10 percent said they used mari-

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juana, and 16 percent said they favored legalizing it. Six years ago, 25 percent said they used it, and 35 percent favored legalization . . .

—75 percent said they were members of an organized religion, and more than 50 percent said they attend weekly services.

—68 percent favored the use of nuclear power for energy.

What we have been saying all the time is that only people with well-developed minds are likely to have strong conservative impulses in these times. Thus, the day the nation's young intelligentsia from the generation polled above takes over will spell the end of liberal simplisms and moral pieties. If the Associated Press is beginning to learn what we have known for so long, then the future is ours.

Charity and Taxes

President Reagan has mystified some segments of the press by calling for an increase in the charitable spirit among the American people, yet providing evidence on his tax returns of less than generous levels of personal contributions to charitable causes. Although the President asserts that he believes in tithing and that his conscience is clear, inquisitive reporters demand to know the identity of the beneficiaries of his gifts.

The President, apparently, is too polite a man to stare down someone like Mary McGrory and retort, "Why would you be so rude as to seek to embarrass those whom I chose to help?" before reminding her that even Presidents retain some privacy while serving in public life. Worse, many of the President's supporters appear defensive about this matter, believing that the tax returns lend some validity to the charges.

What the critics appear to have forgotten, and the Internal Revenue Service might be very quick to remind them, is that the tax codes were written to include many forms of human need, but were never intended to be comprehensive. When people require assistance, some folks respond before the appropriate clearances are provided under the relevant sections of the tax codes. True charity is a matter between those who give, those who receive and the Supreme Judge of the World.

One finds a certain irony in the situation that enables those who accuse President Reagan of a lack of compassion to limit their notion of charity to guidelines provided by the IRS. (EJL) □

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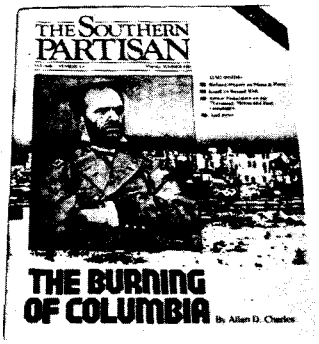

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Here We Go Again

As if there were not already enough evidence that American press coverage helped North Vietnam and the Vietcong to achieve their goals in Indochina, now comes the ultimate proof. Somewhere in the highest reaches of the communists' strategic global command a decision has been made: let in American reporters. During the Vietnam War, only declared supporters—we call them traitors—and well-checked Soviet sympathizers were allowed to come to Hanoi and receive proper brainwashing to further "the cause" in America. Now, after the objective value of the services of all the Fitzgeralds, Dellingers *et alii* has been tested and deemed propitious for the revolution, word has gone out from the conceptualists in Moscow to the operatives in Havana: the San Salvadorean guerrillas are to admit any journalist who wishes to pay them a visit. Reporters from the *New York Times* or *Rolling Stone* will pose no risk, and anyone from the *Washington Post* or ABC can do nothing but good.

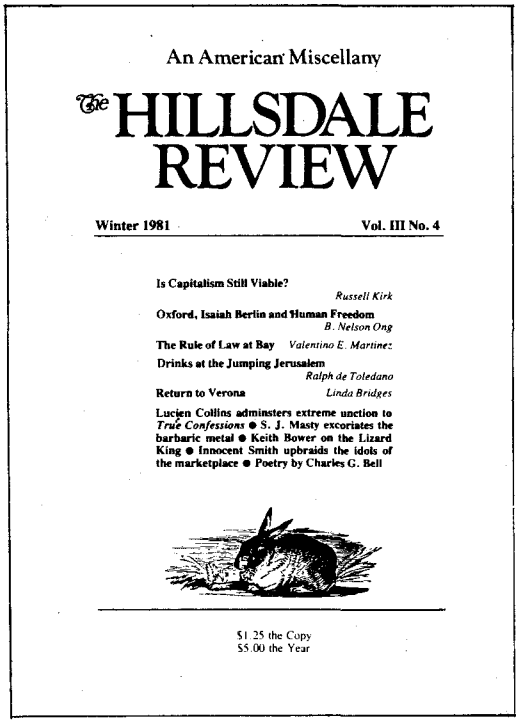
They are so right. CBS has already reported from behind the lines about the touching youthfulness of the armed rebels who play soccer in every minute they can spare from murdering wayward peasants—a movingly human trait. Now, some outfit called the Cox News Service has issued a newsroom poem (eagerly reprinted by the *Chicago Tribune*) entitled "Love is still in bloom in harsh El Salvador." In it are some gems of well-placed sentimentality:

> Romance is alive and well in guerrilla-held territory across Chalatenango province. 'Love does not end with war; it continues,' remarked Marlin, a 20-year-old guerrilla saboteur, as he squeezed his girlfriend, Roxana. 'The revolution even makes love more passionate because we are comrades.'

How correct are those old pros in Moscow! How reliable the American press is! It will take only a few months of this kind of "objective," "truthful," "humanitarian," "authentic" reporting before thousands of Americans descend on Washington, D.C. to manifest their fury about a war which is waged by a murderous, antisexual junta against tender young lovers. □

Subtle Cant

Mr. Drew Middleton is the *New York Times's* military expert. He's been around a long time, and he is highly respected, although God only knows why. Perhaps it is because the respectability of the *Times's* employees has become a sort of sociocultural given in America—which, in turn, may account for some of America's direst woes. The last is a contention that will be proved only over time—enthusiasts may call it history—but, although we have only instinct to tell us so, we're quite confident that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Winter 1981
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The Hillsdale Review provides a much needed forum for young conservative writers in an antagonistic society. It continues the tradition of the high-quality literary quarterly while paying special attention to the underlying origins of current American thought.

Since 1979 *The Hillsdale Review* has been gathering a large number of faithful readers, attacking worn-out cliches of the intellect, and analyzing the future trend of our culture with style, wit, and (we hope) refreshing insight.

We would like to introduce you to the *Review* with an invitation to read what has been perhaps our most controversial issue to date. Our Summer number (1981) dealt with the sexual revolution and launched several salvos at the accretion of cant and hyperbole surrounding that subject. The issue comprises a stimulating and provocative assault on the roots of modern sexual morality.

Past and present contributors to the *Review* include Russell Kirk, George Gilder, Joseph Sobran, Gerhart Niemeyer, E. Michael Jones, and Ralph de Toledano.

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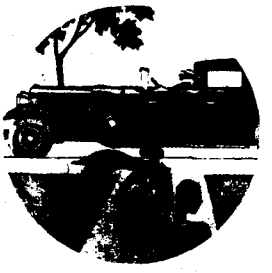
history will vindicate our intuition.

In a section of a recent *New York Times Sunday Magazine,* Mr. Middleton elaborated on why the Vietnam War went the way it did and why it left a lasting and ominous scar on the collective consciousness of the entire professional American military. The article consists of lots of well-measured, calm, even-handed, objective, introspective observations, responsible reporting and mature conclusions—but there is not one word of overwhelmingly evident, accessible-to-anyone, simple truth. What Mr. Middleton fascinatingly manages *not* to mention in his thorough examination of the military's post-Vietnam state of mind is the noun or adjective "liberal."

He thoroughly inspects the feelings of the middle-aged officers' cadre. He detects moods of bitterness, disappointment, glum letdown. Men of arms who served in Vietnam, and who now occupy significant positions within the Army structure, speak of the squalid conduct of the war, which was determined by messy political criteria and manipulated by inept politicians; they feel abused by the political operators who cashed in on society's ignorance by preaching the unwinnability of a war which, to the experts, seemed not only winnable but almost won at the end of the Tet Offensive; they complain of the indifference, often hideous hostility, which met the returning combatants, as if it were the soldiers' fault that America had lost a war for the first time in history. He is fair enough to mention the discord, even open conflict, between the media and the armed forces, but he gravely and resolutely infers that the press's only impropriety was that it did not "understand" the military effort and had too much freedom in its reporting of that effort.

We think that Mr. Middleton is—his stature as a military specialist notwithstanding—appallingly dishonest. People who "did in" that war and who later hissed at the returning veterans were American liberals of all shades and hues. Ironically, it was *liberal* Presidents who began and escalated that war, while other liberals decided that it was an historic occurrence which offended their ideological values. Some of the latter felt that any war was an immoral business per se; others believed that it was an expression of America's greed and megalomania, proof of the bankruptcy and corruption of the American idea of freedom (which they had scorned for most of the



century in the first place). The assumption that, in this instance, America equaled an evil whose only purpose was to annihilate innocent people was no longer simple defeatism: it made the American liberal the objective ally of those who were killing the American soldier; it turned him into an unwitting tool of Moscow, which had labored for an entire decade to involve America in an Asian war. Moscow's strategy did not work in Korea, where America achieved its military objective, but it was splendidly orchestrated in Indochina, where Moscow's most beloved theater of war—a divided nation—offered another opportunity. Moscow's long-range plan was not so much to defeat America, but to rob it of its post-World War II prestige: this, once achieved, would make Soviet territorial gains easy, as the 1970's have shown. But Mr. Middleton, a collector of strategic lore, does not mention this aspect of the war, although we suspect it must have been very much on the minds of the men he interviewed.

The American press, during the 60's thoroughly permeated by liberal sentiments, is, in our view, even more culpable than the rank-and-file American liberal. Vietnam was America's first uncensored war, and the press apparently decided to capitalize on this circumstance. The best method seemed to be one of working out an ideological angle and then enforcing it with all the power of the print and electronic media. Assuming that their liberal bias was both a nobler and more profitable approach, the media distorted, obfuscated, falsified and lied about the war in Asia and about its ramifications at home; with totalitarian single-mindedness, they concealed any support for the war and hammered the magnitude of the protest movement into the nation's consciousness. The daily televised supreme conscience of America with a clipped moustache lied not so much with words and selective information as by the prefabricated expression on his face. Beneath the knuckle of the doctored news, the war effort collapsed—but, oddly enough, none of Mr. Middleton's army spokesmen mentions this aspect of those years. Neither does Mr. Middleton—after all, he has spent a lifetime in the services of the liberal *Times,* whose correspondents were skillful enough to turn one My Lai into a national hysteria of unredeemable guilt, while remaining completely oblivious to countless communist My Lai's and even worse horrors until the boat people's bodies began to float in the China Sea.

After World War I, the German Army evolved a theory of the *Dolchstoss* (being knifed in the back by pacifists and social democrats) as the only reason for Germany's debacle. In 1918 there was only meager proof to sustain that theory, but it does seem applicable to the American defeat in Asia—especially now, after what the American liberal press did to the American armed forces during the 60's and 70's. But neither Mr. Middleton nor his conversants even vaguely suggest such an interpretation. This says something: about the army men, that they are good and true sons of this democratic and pluralistic society; about Mr. Middleton (who certainly must be familiar with the term *Dolchstoss*), that he is either not very decent or a not-very-keen analyst. □

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LIBERAL CULTURE

Siskel

Everybody has his Siskel and so do we—without whom we might be deprived of our right to a bit of merriment amid the all-pervading gloom of high interest rates, communist propaganda movies receiving Oscar nominations and Jesuits working for Soviet imperialism in Latin America. Our Siskel happens to be a film reviewer for the *Chicago Tribune,* a newspaper that calls itself conservative in its editorials but simultaneously supports the rankest sorts of radicalism everywhere else in its pages. This is what our Siskel has to say about the movie, *Personal Best,* and which, of course, makes him such a riot:

> Despite its scenes of two women making love, *Personal Best* is *not* a movie about lesbianism . . .

A couple of paragraphs further on, our Siskel reinforces his powerful thesis by adding: "The women arm wrestle, fondle each other and then begin to live together," which, naturally, reaffirms the notion that the movie is not about lesbianism. The logical question, therefore, would be: What is this movie about? But our Siskel does not feel obligated to provide any coherent answer. Our Siskel is stylistically satisfied with this kind of refined writing: "It will be a shame if *Personal Best* becomes branded as a film about lesbianism, because there is so much more to it than that." What? Is it possible to know what this movie is about and what more there is to it? Or is such an exegesis beyond the intellectual power of our Siskel, whom the *Chicago Tribune*—a conservative paper—by-lines as a "movie critic"?

Not long ago, Siskel-the-critic gave us another display of his cinematose version of ready-to-wear structuralism. Writing about a French import, *Loulou,* he made a statement from the realm of sociophilosophy:

> The film's implicit endorsement of Loulou's brazen sexuality and anti-establishment attitude is thoroughly subversive to the Western world's work ethic.

Senator Scoop Jackson once remarked: "I'm a liberal, but not a fool." Siskel would have difficulty with such a self-assessment: reality would always show the reverse. He has not yet noticed that nowadays the Hefners, Gucciones and Flynts *are* the establishment, and it would therefore be rather useless to challenge them by way of fornication. Oh, Siskel, Siskel . . .

The Banality of Evil

We once heard with horror accounts from survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust about the nazi henchman at Auschwitz, who, after slaughtering countless Jews, went home, ate his sauerbraten, played a wistful *Lieder* on the piano and lovingly fondled his flaxen-haired children, fully at peace with himself. Hannah Arendt, in a dazzling metaphor, termed it the banality of evil, and we all—that is, people of good will and Judeo-Christian heritage—knew that it symbolized the heart of darkness of our time, and we cursed this century which produced such an utter devaluation of humanness. Now Dial Press has published, the Los Angeles Times Syndicate has distributed and the *Chicago Tribune* has excerpted a book entitled *Easy Street,* by a certain Susan Berman. She is identified by the *Tribune* as a "journalist," and she happens to be the daughter of one Davie Berman, gangster and mobster, associate of Meyer Lansky and assorted Mafia greats, member of the most vicious of all underworld outfits—Murder, Inc. In her book, Ms. Berman traces her father's past. One of his pals tells her:

> Susie, only you are left now. Maybe someday you can make the world understand that your father Davie was a good man who acted out of the most basic desire, to see his family continue and survive.

And immediately she gives us the rationale for her literary mission:

> I intend to try.

Interviewed by a reporter, Ms. Berman demonstrates some of the intricate moral gymnastics which are so *en vogue* in the psychoanalytic ethics of modern journalism:

> I have no evidence that my father killed or ordered killings, but I assume he did. That was the business he was in, and it horrifies me. But I can only deal with that by knowing that those were the choices he felt he had to make.

What's the difference between Ms. Berman and the German *Hausfrau* of the 1940's, who always asked her husband to wash his hands after working with chemicals like Cyclon in the gas chambers?

Our Cancer

Not long ago, a columnist for a Midwestern daily wrote:

> Occasionally even those of us who are fervent First Amendment supporters—and who make our livings on the basis of the concept of a free press—have to sit back and wonder if certain things should be allowed to be published.

He then proceeded with information about the Paladin Press, a firm in Boulder, Colorado which publishes how-to manuals with self-explanatory titles: *How to Kill,* Volumes I and II. Its author, one John Minnery, introduces his subject this way:

> The object of this study is to instruct the reader in the techniques of taking another human life, up close, and doing it well. . . . [This book] is completely contemptuous of human life . . .

Someone who goes by the name of Peder C. Lund and who is the president of the Paladin Press commented to the columnist:

> I make no apologies for the books. The author says in the introduction that he makes no moral judgments about what he writes, and neither do I. . . . We have sold between 30,000 and 40,000 copies, not enough to get spectacularly rich off of, but enough for us to keep them in print.

Village Voice, the chief organ of New York style for the behavioral left, which has devoted the last 20 years to the annihilation of any sense of moral norm, finally must have sniffed something morbidly odorous around us. This is what a *VV* film reviewer had to say about *The Fan,*

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a movie so abominably gory that even *VV* came to the conclusion that it may be time for some alteration of its own nihilistic message:

> My own view, however, is that the book, the movie, the genre, have all outlived any social or artistic purpose. . . . Now in the '80s it is the sociopath who sells newspapers and movie tickets. . . . Anyone who breaks the social contract by willfully killing another human being is no longer entitled to liberty—ever. . . . It can be argued more reasonably that two decades of a steady screen diet of kill, kill, slash, slash, have corrupted the collective psyche.

We have been called fascists for saying, for years now, what *Village Voice* is announcing as news, discovery, new-found obligation. *VV* seems not to feel at all guilty for its role in bringing about the amorphous cultural license which has resulted in the acceptance of the likes of the Paladin Press and the box-office success of movies like *The Fan*. They appear to see no ideological interconnection whatsoever. But we read the philosophy of culture a little differently.

For two decades observers of culture have been repeating: if a cinema is created which is devoid of social responsibility and bent on perverting both the word and the concept of freedom, we will all pay for it, either by succumbing to fascism (which invokes "purity of instincts") or by seeing everyday life become a freak show. Hitchcock and Bunuel did not objectivize or reify evil. This cinema does exactly that. In *Psycho*, we felt the killing as the inflicting of pain. In *this* cinema, we feel the slashing as a curiosity. Which annuls the entire concept of a civilization based on the realization that *others* also feel pain. It's a strange inversion—this cinema tries to tell us that the humans on screen do *not* feel pain when they are brutally butchered because it's all fake thrill, just for amusement, merely the pinching of jaded nerves. Its social consequences are horrendous.

Vivat Academia! Vivant Professores!

The news that the workers of Poland have tolled the death knell of Marxism has yet to reach America's universities, where Marxism thrives, unshaken by events out in the real world. According to an article in the January 25, 1982 issue of *U.S. News & World Report*, Marxist professors have established their own little satrapies in those ivied halls, especially in departments of history and political science. A radical leftist now reigns as vice president of the American Political Science Association, and in recent years radicals have twice held the presidency of the prestigious Organization of American Historians. In American academe not only has Marxism not died—it has been granted tenure.

Ludicrous as it seems, well-paid, comfortably secure and presumably intelligent distributors of knowledge have become the vanguard of a dream vision of a proletariat that does not exist empirically. Lewis Carroll's White Queen coined the perfect motto for America's professorial ignorance: "Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast." The White Queen did not, of course, have a classroom of postadolescents listening in rapt attention to her nonsense. The academy's *idiots savants* batten on the intellectual naiveté and ignorance of a captive audience—but then "captive audience" is a term not unfamiliar in the annals of practical Marxism. □

Editor's Comment

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predominantly the mobile urban liberal intelligentsia of the last generation—are very likely to have sustained psychological and biological damages whose dimensions are still unmeasurable. We are looking at the slogan "buy now, pay later" transplanted into the realm of delicate moral and emotional membranes. We've all heard about hippie communes which reactivated venereal diseases believed to have been extinct for centuries. A woman, contrary to feminist allegations, is more vulnerable to license institutionalized by fashion than a man is, both physiologically and mentally, and she more easily falls prey to situational ethics and the void of criteria. The 1980's will bring an incipient awareness of the later payments which will be due from the women who bought the stereotypes of the "revolution" in the 70's—the facts of life and their renditions in literature will tell us what happened to the women who purchased the pristine shamelessness and the "wholesome" atrophy of standards. We are already beginning to hear about the gnawing feelings of emptiness that are inherent in any existence divorced from life's basic and inescapable truths. The main culprit, of course, is the liberal communication complex which, over two decades, merely "reported what was taking place" and "what people wanted"—according to the words of a *New York Times* editor. The testimony to the press's grim role probably will never sink into the America public's consciousness, and the media's mendacity will triumph once again with the homily, "we do not create social climates or cultural moods—we reflect them," which, of course, is the century's most ghastly lie. Beginning with the *Times*, this benign promotion of sexual nihilism trickles down to every local paper in the country, democratizing the ancient rot of moneyed classes into the shabby, cheap licentiousness of the provincia.

Thus, the "revolution" has proved to be little more than soiling the nation's cultural fabric. Since the commercial exploitation of sex and the political rip-off syndrome are inseparable, the brutalization of sexual sentiments will ultimately produce inferior and shoddier Americans of both genders—and there are sinister forces both within our society and abroad which are profoundly interested in exactly that consequence. The perverted First Amendment is perhaps the most painful casualty in this development: it's doubtful that Jefferson intended it to protect *Hustler* magazine. And who knows how many of us will pay dearly for the collusion of corrupted "sexologists" with ruthless media entrepreneurs who, in the name of liberal progress, have dismantled some of man's and woman's most reliable supports for their forming of mankind together?

—Leopold Tyrmand

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